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RELIGION AND BRITISH SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY:
A CRITICAL SURVEY OF E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

by

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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance,
a thesis entitled "Religion and British Social Anthropology:
A Critical Survey of E. E. Evans-Pritchard" submitted by
Mary M. Young in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

Edward E. Evans-Pritchard has devoted considerable attention to problems of witchcraft, magic and primitive religion. Over the years his theoretical position, fostered in the Durkheimian tradition and that of British social anthropology under the tutelage of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, has undergone some modifications.

His early treatment of Azande witchcraft and magic, while expressed in functional terms, displays his primary concern to reveal relations between sets of beliefs which constitute a logical and coherent system. His later work on Nuer religion, taken in conjunction with his general writing on social anthropology, exhibits a preoccupation with indigenous systems of meaning. These are then subjected to structural analysis for the purpose of eliciting patterns; in this process history is injected into analysis.

It is suggested that the several factors which contributed to this change include: variable conditions of field work, which led to an explicit study of values in his Nuer writings; the period of time when field work occurred, which forced a recognition of the usefulness of a diachronic perspective and of individual phenomena in analysis; an interest in 'meaning' which superceded that of 'function' and provided the basis for the search for relations within and between systems; and the assumption of the reality of a spiritual being held by the people under study, which induced a recognition of the personal dimension of religious experience in analysis. It is further suggested that the work of Mauss provided theoretical stimulation for the development of an 'holistic' approach to

the study of society and culture.

A survey of the writing on primitive religion and magic by three of his more prominent students, Middleton, Beattie and Lienhardt, indicates that his influence in this area has been slight with the exception of the latter. In the case of Lienhardt, however, the evidence is inconclusive.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Brief Biographical Details

Edward E. Evans-Pritchard was born in England in 1902, the son of an English clergyman. He began his education at Winchester College and subsequently received his M.A. in anthropology at Exeter College, Oxford and his Ph.D. at the University of London. During his training in anthropology he studied under Malinowski and Seligman, the latter prompting him to undertake field work among the Azande of the Southern Sudan, part of his own area of research. The result was a long and warm association with Seligman who acted as advisor on two of Evans-Pritchard's major publications.

Two characteristic facets of Seligman's work are apparent in Evans-Pritchard's writing, although we can only comment on the similarities without speculating as to whether they exist through training or by nature. The first is an elegant and highly methodical ordering of field data, common to both, which has resulted in a recent assessment of Evans-Pritchard as "the greatest living ethnographer" ("Viking Fund Medalists", Current Anthropology, 1961:198). The second facet is evident in the sense of responsibility to contemporary society and to posterity which pervades Evans-Pritchard's work. In an obituary article, Fortes (1941:1) comments on Seligman's position that anthropologists carry a particular obligation to the future, in that they are recording fast disappearing traditional life-ways. Throughout Evans-Pritchard's work one is struck by an increasing commitment to extend this concern beyond recording towards understanding. This concern may be seen on three

levels: first, in its practical aspects to facilitate social relations in the colonial situation; second, to obtain a clearer perspective on one's own culture and "come to understand it better against a background of the totality of human experience and endeavour" (Evans-Pritchard, 1951:129); and third, as an integral element in sociological analysis.

Field Experiences and Their Implications

Between 1926 and 1939 Evans-Pritchard made six major and several minor expeditions to Central, East and North Africa--specifically to the Sudan, the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Upper Egypt. From 1926 to 1930 he spent twenty months among the Azande of the Southern Sudan, the results of which were to form part of Seligman's major descriptive coverage of Nilotic peoples. Evans-Pritchard's field expeditions were, for the most part, undertaken at the request of, and financed by, the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, in conjunction with the Royal Society and the Trustees of the L. S. Rockefeller Memorial Fund. Despite his connection with officialdom he was allowed considerable freedom of movement, although his observations took place mainly in Government Settlements. Among the Azande he made use of two regular informants along with direct and repeated observation. Cross-questioning of Zande engaged in particular roles as well as some participation in certain social situations provided more data. However, in a later work, Evans-Pritchard (1940:15) confesses that his knowledge of the Azande was less intimate than he had hoped:

Azande would not allow me to live as one of themselves.... Among Azande I was compelled to live outside the community.... Azande treated me as a superior....

On the other hand, he feels that this set of circumstances permitted him to write a more highly detailed account of Azande than of the Nuer, a

people with whom he lived, eventually, in extremely close contact.

It may be asked if this brief reference to Evans-Pritchard's disparate field experiences throws any highlights on questions which bear on field work and the aims and methods of anthropology. Is there, as Evans-Pritchard seems to suggest, a degree of non-involvement which favours "detailed sociological studies", in that opportunities for the selection and presentation of specific problems can more readily be found? And, conversely, does close intimacy and participation in the daily life of a people lead, of necessity, to a different type of analysis, because 'custom' tends to obscure structural and functional relations? Because of his enforced intimacy with them, Evans-Pritchard (1940:15) states of the Nuer:

I believe that I have understood the chief values of the Nuer and am able to present a true outline of their social structure, but I regard, and have designed this volume, as a contribution to the ethnology of a particular area rather than as a detailed sociological study....

We hope to return to these questions and explore them in later chapters. And finally, although parenthetically, it may be asked if the conditions of colonialism under which most British anthropologists worked until recent times have tended to produce field situations in which sociological studies are not only the most probable, but the most possible.

Subsequent to his work among the Azande, Evans-Pritchard was again asked to undertake field work by the Anglo-Egyptian Government, this time among the Nuer. From 1930 to 1936 he spent twelve months with them, plagued for the greater part of the time by sickness and a hostile response. This was due, in part, to repressive military measures taken by the Government against the Nuer. Despite these initial setbacks, however, he succeeded in establishing himself as a member of the

community of a cattle camp and began "to be accepted as such, especially when I had acquired a few cattle" (Evans-Pritchard, 1940:13). His modus operandi here was far different from what he had been able to initiate among the Azande. Without regular informants and with the insistence on the part of the Nuer that he submit to their custom, he was forced to participate in the everyday life of the community. In consequence his information "was thus gathered in particles, each Nuer I met being used as a source of knowledge . . ." (Evans-Pritchard, 1940:15). As previously indicated, Evans-Pritchard saw his initial work on the Nuer as having a distinctively different quality which, as he continued to write up his data, became more pronounced. In later chapters this change and its wider implications will be discussed.

While attempting to become established among the Nuer in 1936, he made a side trip to the Luo of Kenya to survey their political structure. His purpose was to search for political similarities among the Lango, Nuer, Anuak and other Nilotic peoples. These expeditions to the Sudan furnished Evans-Pritchard with the bulk of material for his major ethnographic works:

Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande (1937)

The Nuer (1940)

The Political System of the Anuak (1940)

African Political Systems (editor, with M. Fortes, 1940)

Kinship and Marriage Among the Nuer (1951)

Nuer Religion (1956)

It will be noted that though his interests were wide, two foci, centering around the topics of religion and politics, become evident. These foci were to be combined in a later work which grew out of his experiences in North Africa during World War II.

After the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1939 Evans-Pritchard was sent as Political Officer to the Alawite Territory of Syria for a year and in 1942 was posted as Political Officer to the 3rd British Military Administration of Cyrenaica, where he spent over two years. Although he undertook no systematic analysis at this time, this period of military duty resulted in the publication of a monograph on the history of the development of a Muslim religious fraternity--the Sanusi--into a political and economic organization. In addition to combining two of his major interests, this work reveals changes in Evans-Pritchard's thought. We shall see that it forms the attempt to apply structural analysis to history and social change--an explicit divergence from what may be regarded as a-historical British anthropological writing.

Orientation of Studies

In concluding this review of Evans-Pritchard's field experiences it should be noted that at all times he was associated with Government. It is presumed that various administrations hoped his studies would provide information which would be useful in dealing with native peoples. This circumstance raises points in two general areas of discussion. To what extent did Evans-Pritchard's connection with Government (and in the case of the Nuer, an overtly hostile government) affect the information given and the behaviour acted out in his presence? This is, of course, a persistent factor in many field studies and answers can only be conjectural. It is suggested, however, that Evans-Pritchard's meticulous and repeated checks of field data reduced such a possibility to negligible proportions.

A more significant question is the following: to what extent did his tie with governmental circles orient his thought towards problems

of social order and social control? Perhaps it is significant that his first major publication, Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande, deals with one of the thornier problems which faced colonial administrators. Indeed, in his Introduction to this work he states: "I hope the present volume will be of service to political officers, doctors and missionaries in Zandeland . . ." (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:3). Even earlier, in 1931, he had attempted to present a native viewpoint of magic and its relation to native concepts of crime and justice (Evans-Pritchard, 1931b: 22-55). His purpose was explicit and dual: the article was to edify administrative personnel and add to the body of anthropological writings on magic.

This point is raised in an attempt to explore the several factors which may have induced Evans-Pritchard to focus a considerable amount of attention on matters relating to religion and magic. We can only guess at the total complex of motives which produced this tendency, but some of these may refer to a commitment, reinforced by his field experiences, to ease the difficulties of social control and to promote better understanding between native peoples and their governing bodies. Anthropologists are well aware of the friction produced by the clash of Christian and native ideologies which has had such disastrous results for many colonized peoples. Evans-Pritchard, in the tradition of Tylor, was concerned to show that native magico-religious beliefs and practices are not irrational and bizarre, but form a coherent system to the people themselves. And because anthropologists are trained to see relationships which may remain hidden to the layman, perhaps he also considered that a focus on this exacerbating problem might ease tensions in other areas of interaction.

Another factor to be considered is Evans-Pritchard's training

under Malinowski at the University of London. By the middle of the 1920's Malinowski (1954) had already published his most compelling work in the field of magic, religion and related topics. His influence is apparent in Evans-Pritchard's choice of subject matter for the Ph.D. dissertation, which was a study of the entire range of magic in two societies, Azande and Trobriander. Some of Evans-Pritchard's early work reveals an interest in testing and exploring Malinowski's formulations in this area of research.

Personal Religious Convictions

Evans-Pritchard's later and more general publications exhibit a continuing concern with primitive religion, including his most recent major work, Theories of Primitive Religion, published in 1965. It is possible that such an interest has been sustained, in part, by his own religious convictions; it is known that during his career he became converted to Roman Catholicism. Little can be said on this highly private matter except to comment that a personal commitment to organized religion is a rarity among anthropologists in the English speaking world. As Evans-Pritchard himself wrote, writers in anthropology have long been distinguished by an indifference, if not an antipathy, to the organized Christian Churches. They are much more prone to adhere to a cultural relativistic attitude in religious matters (Evans-Pritchard, 1959: passim). It seems probable, therefore, that this commitment may have fostered an empathy in Evans-Pritchard which found its expression in studies of primitive religion. In a later chapter it is proposed to examine if such an empathy may have given a distinctive quality to his writing on Nuer religion.

This discussion of Evans-Pritchard's training in anthropology,

his field experiences and his own religious convictions forms an attempt to perceive relations among these specific factors, relations which may shed light on the orientation of his work. It is not possible to determine the weight of these factors in the examination of one facet of a man's work, but it is suggested that there is a correlation between all three. To what extent, if any, these factors operated to bring changes in his thought will be discussed after analysis of his main topical areas of research in the field of religion.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

In order to explore Evans-Pritchard's studies of religion a preliminary examination of his general theoretical position should be attempted in the light of developments in British anthropology generally. It seems necessary, therefore, to return to the past. In doing so we follow Pocock's rationale for incorporating an historical perspective when approaching the analysis of social anthropology. He says: "The discipline as it is today contains its history to a remarkable degree" (Pocock, 1961:3). Therefore an historical approach enables us to locate the positions of several writers relevant to our problems from the resultant 'genealogy'. Moreover, as much writing in anthropology has been polemic in nature--an inevitable outcome in a young science--divergences from the paradigms of the times should be seen in historical perspective.

The French Social Philosophers

Evans-Pritchard (1959:29) has stated that it is not possible to discuss developments in British anthropology without reference to the French School. Nor is it possible to refer to the French School without a brief and rather superficial excursion into philosophy; early writers on society and man were of a philosophical mind, concerned with rationalism, humanity and the progress and regeneration of mankind. For this reason they were inevitably led towards an analysis of religion with regard to its function and usefulness for the revitalization process which they envisaged for society. Indeed, both Saint-Simon and Comte

proposed the establishment of a new religion--a secularist church--which would meet the needs of an industrial and scientific age. Although they regarded most religious beliefs as mistaken, they recognized their social function with regard to change. No doubt, however, they looked forward to the day when the evolutionary process would terminate not only false beliefs but also the institutions which upheld them--an illogical confusion of evolutionary theory and Utopian philosophy.

During the eighteenth century Scottish moral philosophers such as Hume, Adam Smith and the later Ferguson, were insisting that societies are natural systems. "By this they meant in particular that society derives from human nature and not from a social contract.... Being regarded as natural systems or organisms, societies must be studied empirically and inductively ..." (Evans-Pritchard, 1951c:23). Thus the concept of the science of society as a natural science was disseminated and the separation of social facts from magico-religious evaluation was achieved. Once this concept had found favour, it was but a step towards postulating positive laws which become operative when man, "obeying one of the laws of his nature, associates with others in society" (Pocock, 1961:10). By 1748 Montesquieu had taken this step, declaring that positive laws concerning society do not vary; further, by applying the doctrine of Rationalism, they could be discovered and understood without reference to the individual or to chance events.

The eighteenth century philosophers were concerned with the idea of progress which they believed should be measured by the growth of rationalism in all aspects of culture. It fell to Comte to re-define this concept in terms of evolutionary theory. In his hands it became a law governing three stages of cultural development, moving from theology, through metaphysics to positive science. Durkheim has credited Comte

with a further highly significant contribution to the social sciences.

Comte believed that positive laws governing society were essentially the same as natural laws; thus the methods of the natural sciences and the social sciences were not different and should not be so regarded.

It has been said "... as men became familiar with the application of Newton's ideas to a wide range of physical phenomena, they came to accept mechanics as basic and natural.... The eighteenth century witnessed an attempt to set up a science of human nature with applications to economics and politics along the lines that had proved effective in physics" (Kemble, 1966:303, 309). From this intellectual matrix, therefore, came the "tendency to make the transition from the rationalistic armchair theorizing of the Enlightenment to the methodological study of social facts" (Martindale, 1960:37). The work of Von Savigny in jurisprudence, Waitz on society and the later Boucher de Perthes are examples of the drive to apply experimental-observational techniques outside the physical sciences.

The heritage which these social philosophers bequeathed and the influence which they exerted on subsequent social scientists, particularly in Britain, has been considerable. Their influence seems to have outlasted that of other Continental writers, such as Rickert and Dilthey who came to hold that sociology is not a natural but a cultural science. Montesquieu's positivism, raised to further heights by Comte's explicit evolutionary theory, has had several far-reaching results for anthropology. The first, deriving from the concept of society as a natural phenomenon and subject to positive laws, is a strict adherence to empiricism. (Incidentally, this feature does not mark the works of the originators of the positive philosophy; they operated by a priori reasoning rather than by observation and induction.) Secondly, because

of the search for positive laws, a normative approach to the data is essential, where concern is for similarities rather than differences. Finally, the stages of development are to be revealed by the comparative method, which, in the hands of the eighteenth and nineteenth century writers, resulted in the writing of "theoretical or conjectural history" (Evans-Pritchard, 1951c:24).

When we examine Firth's (1951:1-40) explication of "The Meaning of Social Anthropology" we find that he states, with some sophisticated modifications, these same basic features which he believes distinguish social anthropology today. Thus it is almost possible to draw a direct line from the French writers of the eighteenth century, through the later Durkheim and his associates of Année Sociologique, to some of Britain's most influential writers of recent times. However, developments rarely lend themselves to so simple an analysis and we must look to the British writers of the nineteenth century for a more comprehensive picture and finally to Durkheim himself.

From 1876-96 Herbert Spencer published The Principles of Sociology in which he continued to develop the concept of society as an organism. This 'organic analogy' is described in modern terms by Firth (1951:18):

Any particular item selected for examination is always considered with some regard to its place in the total phenomena in the life of the human group concerned.

Thus we find two seemingly contradictory characteristics becoming incorporated into British social science. On the one hand, the comparative method requires the isolability of items for comparison; on the other, the organic analogy demands an 'holistic' approach. The tendency to favour one or the other of these viewpoints is part of the history of

British anthropology.

The Evolutionists

The nineteenth century writers were firmly committed to the comparative method and evolutionary theory. In the search for origins and general laws applicable to all human society, they initiated systematic and comparative studies of social institutions. Tylor's contribution of the concept of culture extended the parameters of the subject matter to include "knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom . . ." which enabled these matters to be treated in the generic sense. Although the search for origins and the methods employed by the nineteenth century 'greats', Tylor, Marett, McLennan, Robertson Smith and Frazer, later fell into disrepute, some of their ideas with regard to the study of religion are still current. Bidney (1962:441) writes:

On the whole, I find that contemporary cultural anthropologists have been inclined to accept the Marett-Tylor-Frazer evolutionary interpretation of religion and to explain the origin and development of religion from a stage of pre-animism, through pluralistic animism, to monotheistic thought.

We reserve for a later chapter the more specific contributions of these nineteenth century writers for comparison with Evans-Pritchard's formulations.

Emile Durkheim

The swing away from the search for origins and the writing of 'theoretical history' towards an organic view of society was touched off in the writings of Durkheim. His central position is approached through the social fact, which is "every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint" (Durkheim, 1964a:13). Thus social facts are general, transmissible and coercive.

Moreover, social facts are sui generis and can only be understood in relation to other social facts. Further, in the attempt "to explain a social fact, it is not enough to show the cause on which it depends; we must also ... show its function in the establishment of social order" (97). Durkheim also developed a new and important concept--the idea of the collective conscience or consciousness--"an almost mystical participation and submission to the thought of the group" (Hays, 1964: 300). Such a phenomenon did not yield to comprehension through individual psychology because it displayed the transcendence of society over the individual. In essence, he believed that the whole (society) was different from the sum of its parts (individuals). The collective consciousness is "to be found in each part because it exists in the whole, rather than in the whole because it exists in the parts" (9).

Because of the objectivity he demanded in method, dominated as it was by the idea that social facts are things and must be so treated, the importance of empiricism is heavily reinforced in Durkheim's writing.

For our purposes it is necessary to review the contributions made by Durkheim to the study of religion. Taylor (1963:126) has suggested that Durkheim's whole approach was a polemic against the individualism of medieval Christianity, where Truth was located in the cognitive act of the individual who became an "indivisible, original, discrete, rational force, constituting an independent reality". In this view, therefore, institutions had little reality. But Durkheim believed that "individual thinking is a function of institutionalized structure of society" and logically for him, "thought had ceased to have validity within itself and institutions had become the validation basis of all experience" (128-9). Whatever the origins of such contentions--and one could postulate that they be located in his upbringing and rabbinic

background--Durkheim firmly held that the truth of religion resided in society and religious beliefs were to be seen as reflections or projections of the social order. It follows, then, that religious rituals dominated religious life because they served to renew feelings of solidarity necessary to the maintenance of society.

Such are the crucial features of Durkheim's theory of religion, which he elaborated with the sacred/profane dichotomy and tested against what he believed to be the elementary forms of religious life, Australian totemism. But Durkheim's major contribution lay in exposing the fallacy of the evolutionists' argument that religion was an illusion--a logical construct based on a false association of ideas in the mind of primitive man. Religion, says Durkheim, has an objective basis which is society itself and, as it is a social phenomenon, must be present in all societies.

With Durkheim and the eighteenth century positive philosophers can be found the origins of the structural/functional studies of British anthropologists. The emphasis on the specificity of systems which constitute the total society, the development of natural scientific methods to deal with a 'natural' phenomenon, the relations and the functions of particular institutions to the total society, the disavowal of psychology (the science of the individual mind) and the disregard for history are all present in Durkheim's postulations, if not in his actual work. What is lacking in British anthropology is the explicit moral sense with which Durkheim and his predecessors set out to establish a science which would transform philosophy and guide political action.

Radcliffe-Brown

For Evans-Pritchard's more immediate intellectual heritage we

must look to Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski, ignoring, but not forgetful of, the German and English diffusionists. And, as Firth (1952:38) has pointed out "in the systematic theory of social institutions, especially kinship, the work of Lowie and Kroeber ... has had a definite influence on British anthropologists." But it was Radcliffe-Brown who selectively adopted and modified Durkheim's work, incorporating it into British anthropology; and, incidentally, drawing a clear distinction between ethnology and social anthropology.* Durkheim's polemic against sensational psychology and his exposition of society in static terms was reinforced in Radcliffe-Brown's writings. In his explication of social structure, social system and social function he refined the positivistic organicism of earlier times, bringing into sharper focus the need for systematic, detailed, comprehensive on-the-spot studies of primitive peoples. Thus field investigations became an essential part of the process whereby "theoretical problems of general sociology are investigated by research in primitive societies ..." (Evans-Pritchard, 1951c:56).

Initially Radcliffe-Brown's field work among the Andaman Islanders induced a recognition of the importance of the meaning of social behaviour from the actors' as well as the observer's viewpoint, particularly as this applied to the function of beliefs and institutions. But, as Pocock (1961:55) has pointed out, "function ... becomes the sociological meaning which (increasingly in his work) swallows up the subjective meaning of the social phenomena". In other words, the function of particular institutions to maintain social integration in each society

*Ethnology is generally held in Britain to be the study of the cultural characteristics of peoples in space and time. This latter aspect, seen as speculative history, is believed to be of limited value to social anthropology which is devoted to the study of institutionalized social behaviour and the relations between such institutions.

comes to serve as explanation in both the actors' and observer's terms. It is immediately apparent in Evans-Pritchard's work that his concern with subjective meaning, rendered systematically, precludes its confusion with sociological meaning.

In his writings on religion Radcliffe-Brown emphasizes the manner in which ritual and belief reinforce cohesion in a society by strengthening and perpetuating the necessary moral sentiments which sustain it. These sentiments are experienced through interaction with others of the group. Linking ritual and belief with sentiments, which are then seen in functional relations with certain aspects of the social structure, Radcliffe-Brown diverges from Durkheim's thesis that collective representations cannot be explained by reference to such aspects. Moreover he does not provide for the sociological study of religion as a system in its own right: the title of one of his major articles on religion is called, "Religion and Society" (emphasis mine).

Malinowski

The second major influence in British social anthropology between the two World Wars was that of Malinowski. It is said that he was much influenced by the pragmatism of William James (Leach, 1964:121) and this tends to give his anthropology a somewhat distinctive flavour. The self-styled 'father of functionalism' was also affected by the French School in that he worked within the framework of the organic analogy, but he modified it to include both biological and cultural determinants. Because his cultural isolate, the institution, was tied to the organic needs of the individual as well as to derived needs, both instrumental and integrative, his concept of function was 'practically useful'. This concept was different from that of Radcliffe-Brown, which was logical or

plausible. Further, as he conceived the form of the institution as the manner of satisfying biological and cultural needs, it was perforce determined by its function.

Malinowski's most important work in primitive religion dealt with magic and in this he proceeded from the postulate that all human beings are "reasonable (sensibly practical) individuals" (Leach, 1957: 127). Thus magic is a "pragmatic attitude built up of reason, feeling and will alike. It is a mode of action as well as a system of belief" (Malinowski, 1954:24). In a world where technology gives little mastery over the conditions of life, magic is the substitute for as yet unknown activities and skills and its function is both psychological and biological. The art of magic, moreover, tends to lie in the hands of specialists, whereas religion is the concern of the group. The function of religion is an integrative one because it:

establishes, fixes and enhances all valuable mental attitudes, such as reverence for tradition, harmony with environment, courage and confidence in the struggle with difficulties and at the prospect of death.
(Malinowski, 1954:89)

The Concept of Structure

An important concept in much of the writing of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was that of structure. We can find it specifically, but largely unspecified, in the work of such men as Hobbes, Rousseau and the later Spencer, Marx and Durkheim, and it has been suggested by Firth that it was largely taken for granted until recent times. Now social scientists are much more aware of the implications of its use. Incidentally, Firth (1951:29) suggests that perhaps it conforms to the "budget of terms of general application" which should not be defined too closely in order that the differences in the concept may

bring fresh insights. But because these differences are often covert, it is necessary to examine how the concept of structure has been used in recent writings for comparison with Evans-Pritchard's formulations.

It would be generally agreed, I believe, that the basic definition of structure can be rendered in Radcliffe-Brown's (1965:9) terms as "some sort of ordered arrangements of parts or components". Employed in terms of social life, he can talk of a social structure as a continuity in the arrangements of persons in relation to one another, which includes "all social relations of person to person" and the "differentiation of individuals and of classes by their social role" (191). He believes social relationships are not haphazard but are determined by regularities (norms) operative in the social process. His analysis is undertaken to establish the relations between structure and process in functional terms.

Firth (1951:31) prefers to combine structure and action: continuity in social structure is preserved by "those social relations which seem to be of critical importance for the behaviour of members of the society, so that if such relations were not in operation, the society could not be said to exist in that form". Thus his concept of social structure is a narrower abstraction from 'society' than that of Radcliffe-Brown. By emphasizing action with its factor of choice, as well as function, Firth believes he can tackle social change.

Evans-Pritchard (1951c:61), while concurring with Firth's abstraction of social structure, sees it in terms of pattern or design where the structural order is "intelligible not merely at the level of consciousness and action ... but also at the level of sociological analysis". In abstracting the patterns he is then able to see society as a "set of interrelated abstractions" which demonstrates "consistency and

not necessary relations between social activities" (62). Thus his structural analysis is carried on into the integration of what has been abstracted from the social life. The success of this operation depends on the character, temperament and expertise of the anthropologist and is a conceptual divergence from the positivistic doctrine, in that the anthropologist is creatively involved in analysis.

Evans-Pritchard in Perspective

In this review I have attempted to indicate some of the major theoretical trends and the writers that have been significant for the development of British social anthropology, for Evans-Pritchard's theoretical position is the result of the adoption, selection and blending of these elements. For the moment we must omit discussion of the work of Levy-Bruhl and Max Weber because their effect on British anthropology generally has been slight although they have influenced individual writers. We may note with interest, however, that Firth believes the present generation of British anthropologists has been considerably influenced by the writings of Weber. In general, then, it may be said that Evans-Pritchard inherited an empiricist, normative and comparative approach to the study of societies, one which was laid down mainly by the eighteenth century social philosophers and developed by Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown. Thus sets of social relations, relations between members of society and social groups, are the major themes for sociological analysis.

The study of religion, therefore, is approached from a social rather than an individual viewpoint and Evans-Pritchard's task is to see how religious facts are related to each other and to social life. His concept of structure, however, leads him to be explicit in stating that

he shuns explanations in favour of uncovering relations; that he rejects generalizations unless they are restricted to a particular type of religion or to a limited group of closely related peoples; and that he demands the full context of facts plus a vigorous effort to comprehend the whole system of thought and belief of the people under study. These principles, made explicit in 1951 in his book, Social Anthropology, were beginning to be developed in his earliest writings. In his mode of analysis the emphasis on field work is constant, the recording of texts and the understanding of the native language being of primary importance. The results of the observation of behaviour vis-a-vis what a people say they are doing and why must be seen, he says, in terms of "a form or pattern which allows us to speak of it as a system, or structure, within which, and in accordance with which, its members live their lives" (Evans-Pritchard, 1951c:20).

Finally, it should be noted that his intellectual heritage also includes the analytical separation of 'culture' and 'society' which, implicit in Durkheim's work, was made explicit by Radcliffe-Brown.* The different abstractions from the same reality which these two concepts imply, of course, lead to methodological variations. As we noted from the previous chapter the possibilities for obtaining these diverse abstractions may be closely related to conditions of field work.

*In his Introduction to Structure and Function in Primitive Society (p. 5) Radcliffe-Brown states: "The transmission of learnt ways of thinking, feeling and acting constitutes the cultural process...."

CHAPTER THREE

WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC

Witchcraft Among the Azande

Evans-Pritchard's major writing on the subject of witchcraft is derived from his field work among the Azande. Indeed, his Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande (1937) is the only full-scale monograph about the Azande which has yet appeared. In his Introduction he states that, despite the desirability of tackling fundamental sociological themes, he found that "in the early stages of my work I became interested in the subjects described in this book and found it easy to collect information about them" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:3). Apparently in Zandeland ideas and actions connected with witchcraft lie near the surface of life and information on the topic is freely available both from native statements and observation of the social scene. This factor seems to tie in nicely with the conditions under which Evans-Pritchard was forced to carry out his field work--primarily as an outsider and a superior. In this regard it may be worth noting that in preparing his monograph, Navaho Witchcraft (1944), Kluckhohn was able to use 93 paid and a number of unpaid informants. This contrasts markedly with Evans-Pritchard's use of two regular informants. Referring to field work conditions discussed in the first chapter, again we may ask to what extent theoretical positions are dependent on intellectual traditions or on conditions of field work.

It should be remembered that in Evans-Pritchard's hands, a mystical notion such as witchcraft is not to be approached from a cognitive, rationalistic viewpoint and explained in terms of human society

generally. He says, "I am not anxious to define witchcraft, oracles and magic as ideal types of thought ..." (8). Witchcraft is to be seen as a social phenomenon. This is reminiscent, of course, of Durkheim's thesis that categories of thought are socially determined. Evans-Pritchard states:

... people do not comprehend the nature of
witchcraft till they are used to operating the
oracles ... the concept grows with the social
experience of each individual. (31)

Witchcraft, and its attendant counter-measures, is treated, in analysis, as an institution through which the anthropologist can arrive at the hidden connections of thought, belief and action. When the relations between uniformities of belief and action are understood, then a comparison may be made with more familiar beliefs--those of the anthropologist. Such a comparison is not intended to be invidious but is a preliminary procedure to sociological analysis, where native and familiar concepts may be matched and overlapped in an attempt to establish significant relationships. At this point the importance of the duration of field work and of working in the native language becomes apparent. Relying on his ability to extract key concepts from the language through long familiarity with the culture, the anthropologist hopes to explain them in English without falling into the trap of assigning Western ideas to such concepts and thus rendering them falsely. A similar stricture, of course, applies equally to the reader. Therefore in the search for interrelations and functions, the dimension of meaning is an integral element.

The premises on which the Azande posit their system of belief and action may be succinctly summarized as follows. Because "a witch performs no rite, utters no spell and possesses no medicines", witchcraft

is a psychic act (21). The physiological evidence of witchcraft--mangu--may be revealed by autopsy in the body of a dead person suspected or accused of having been a witch. For the Azande, it is an objective condition found in the abdomen. Moreover, mangu is believed to be inherited by unilinear descent from parent to child--father to son, mother to daughter. Nevertheless, Evans-Pritchard states that witchcraft is not an objective reality and "witches, as Azande conceive them, cannot exist" (63).

Despite the seemingly contradictory nature of these premises, they do indeed form a logical and coherent system of belief for the Azande. First, "while witchcraft itself is part of the human organism ... the soul of witchcraft, mbisimo mangu, is a concept that bridges over the distance between the person of the witch and the person of his victim" (33). Its action cannot be perceived, although its passage may be; therefore witchcraft is a psychic act. Second, mangu is believed to reside in the body, but, in fact, "the qualities they (Azande) attribute to it and the rest of their beliefs about it are mystical" (63).

Discovery of witchcraft substance is post hoc, in other words, after the suspect is dead and his witchcraft activity at an end. As a Zande is interested only in the particular witch who is bewitching him at the moment, the existence of witchcraft substance is less important than the beliefs about its power. Third, "the Azande generally regard witchcraft as an individual trait and it is treated as such in spite of its association with kinship" (25). In fact the Azande manipulate the very facts of biological transmission to fit their premises.* Thus witchcraft

*The Azande may admit the person is a witch but say he is a bastard. Or they may cite evidence from other autopsies which have cleared their kinsmen. Or they may plead that if witchcraft substance is present it is inoperative or 'cool'.

is seen only in relation to particular individuals in specific situations and not as a permanent condition. "It is a response to certain situations and not an intricate intellectual concept" (118).

In such situations the integral elements are misfortune, illness or death. Nevertheless the existence or action of phenomena are not accounted for in mystical terms alone. The Azande do recognize Western ideas of cause and effect, but witchcraft is seen to be the socially relevant cause.

It is not a necessary link in a sequence of events but something external to them that participates in them and gives them a peculiar value. (72)

By observation of the social situations in which misfortune, illness and death are the major themes, supplemented by statements on these themes, Evans-Pritchard finds that witchcraft functions to explain the relationship between men and misfortune generally. In addition, witchcraft allows intervention and determines social behaviour in such situations, serving not only as an intellectual symbol but providing a mode of action.

It may be remembered that Malinowski talked of magic in terms of a doctrine or philosophy and also as a mode of action. In his thesis, magical ritual

... enables man to carry out with confidence his important tasks, to maintain his poise and his mental integrity in fits of anger, in the throes of hate, of unrequited love, of despair and anxiety. (Malinowski, 1954:90)

Evans-Pritchard also sees action vis-a-vis witchcraft as a means to regulate conduct, but he analyzes this in a social and not a psychological framework. Whereas Malinowski's theory of needs ultimately refers to the individual's well-being, Evans-Pritchard sees witchcraft counter-measures

as a concrete affirmation of the values which regulate social standards.

Among Azande, witchcraft and evil tend to be synonymous and the "Zande phrase 'It is witchcraft' may often be translated simply as 'It is bad'" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:107). Thus those who are most often accused of witchcraft are those who most frequently break the rules of conduct. Therefore there is a relationship between accusations of witchcraft, remedial measures and social harmony. But Evans-Pritchard cannot postulate a necessary relationship between belief, ritual and the social order although "it is in the idiom of witchcraft that Azande express moral rules . . ." (110). Remedial measures or ritual are taken on an individual basis; the corporation of witch-doctors does not divine and cure on behalf of the entire community.

Evans-Pritchard is led to analyze Azande witchcraft in its triple aspects: it is a function of interpersonal relations but at the same time it regulates social conduct; primarily, however, it functions to present a natural philosophy which explains the relation of men to misfortune, illness and death. This analysis is framed in cultural terms. At no point does Evans-Pritchard link specific social relations with witchcraft belief and activities; consequently it is impossible for comparative sociological studies to be done for the purpose of formulating generalizations on the basis of Azande material. He does indicate, however, how the pattern of witchcraft accusations is in harmony with the social structure; for example, nobles are free from accusation by commoners, but not from each other, and nobles may accuse commoners. Accusations are most frequent between those of equal status.

A more important point is the following: despite the postulation of functions, Evans-Pritchard's primary concern is to reveal the ideational system formed by the interdependent relations among beliefs

surrounding witchcraft. These include beliefs regarding procreation, therapeutics and theology (Evans-Pritchard, 1931a:117-130; 1934a:49-61; 1936a:162-203).

Evans-Pritchard wrote little more on the subject of witchcraft except in reference to the work he accomplished with his Zande material. Later references to this topic focus almost exclusively on the relations which constitute a logical system of thought and not on functions of witchcraft. This reflects his growing adherence to a concept of structural analysis in which function yields in importance to meaning. Pocock (1961:73) can say, therefore, of Evans-Pritchard's first monograph, that "one can begin to speak of the structural analysis of social life as opposed to the functional analysis of social structure". .

Divination Among the Azande and the Nuer

As with witchcraft, divination is treated in the framework of the beliefs and practices of each society in which it is found; thus its form and its relations with other elements in a belief system will vary from society to society. Evans-Pritchard's study deals most fully with the Azande institution of divination where it has a distinctive form and an important relationship to witchcraft and magic. It is, in one sense, the hinge which articulates witchcraft belief and counter-activities, for action cannot be initiated until witchcraft has been revealed and the witch identified. On the other hand, divination may be employed to track down sorcery, which, unlike witchcraft, is the conscious manipulation of magical techniques and medicines by one Zande against another. In any situation of misfortune or uncertainty, therefore, divination is the preliminary procedure to action. But as uncertainty attends almost all future events, then divination should be the precursor to almost all

activity. In practice, however, its use is limited to "all occasions regarded by Azande as dangerous or socially important ... (and) ... if a Zande were not to consult ... he would be acting contrary to custom and might suffer in social prestige" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:261). It will be noted from these quotations that Evans-Pritchard focuses on two aspects of divination--the first concerns its interrelations with other beliefs about misfortune and the second aspect refers to its relations to social life.

Divination--or, as Evans-Pritchard defines it, "a method of discovering what is unknown, and often cannot be known, by experiment and logic" (11)--has two main branches among the Azande. The first is composed of the witch-doctors who as diviners locate witchcraft, and as magicians counteract it. The second branch is constituted of 'objective' techniques, the oracles. These two aspects complement each other.

... as diviners, witch-doctors are not regarded as furnishing more than preliminary evidence, and in all matters of moment a man takes a witch-doctor's statement and places it before one of the greater oracles for corroboration. (258)

Although the Azande make use of a number of oracular devices (for example, the rubbing board and the termite stick), the poison oracle is by far the most widely consulted and the most efficacious in their eyes. Essentially, it involves the administration of an 'objective' ordeal, benge, to fowls, although in the past human participation seems to have been an element in the ritual. Benge is a red paste which is believed to exhibit a mystical awareness.

From the behaviour of fowls under this ordeal, especially by their death or survival, Azande receive answers to the questions they place before the oracle. (260)

Despite the fact that benge has poisonous properties related to

strychnine, death is not attributable to this in Azande eyes. They believe that benge itself, when cognizant of all the facts of a situation, makes the decision to spare or kill the fowl and thus answer questions. The Zande oracle, however, is not personified and there is no theory about how it works. The Azande know only that it does work.

In Western terms the ability of benge to reveal that which is hidden, of course, rests on the consequences of the poison working variously on different fowls. But such a reaction is not--indeed cannot--be regarded as a physical cause by the Azande. To do so would destroy their whole interlocking system of mystical beliefs. Attention is always directed towards the mystical cause.

Azande observe the action of the poison oracle as we observe it, but their observations are always subordinated to their beliefs and are incorporated into their beliefs and made to explain them and justify them. (319)

When contradictions in results occur and the prophecy is not fulfilled accurately, Azande find that this "proves how well founded are their beliefs in witchcraft, sorcery and taboos" (338). Evans-Pritchard can thus demonstrate that not only does divination have a necessary place within the Azande system of mystical beliefs, that its relation to other beliefs is logical, but also that it functions to reaffirm these beliefs.

... the main purpose of the oracle and its principal value to the Azande lie in its ability to reveal the play of mystical forces ... the inclination of mystical powers.... (340)

It may be asked, however, if the Azande are cognizant of the poisonous properties of benge apart from its use in divination. Evans-Pritchard believes that on the whole they are not, and that the Azande would regard any such notion as simply silly.

I am sure that no Zande would ever be convinced that you could kill a fowl or person with benge

unless it had been gathered, administered, and addressed in the traditional manner. Were a European to make a test which proved Zande opinion wrong they would stand amazed at the credulity of the European who attempted such an experiment. (315)

On the other hand the cleansing of fowls of poison before eating them, although a rare occurrence, might imply some knowledge of the poisonous properties of benge, but the evidence points overwhelmingly to the fact that the mystical properties of benge predominate.

Because divination articulates belief and action, it intersects with Azande social structure at several important points. Thus the gathering of the oracle poison, the means of acquiring it, the quality of care taken to safeguard it and the cost of operating the oracle are all factors which limit its customary use to certain groups. For example:

Control over the poison oracle by the older men gives them great power over their juniors and is one of the main sources of their prestige. (238)

In a similar vein, the holding of a seance at which witch-doctors divine and dance against witchcraft involves considerable time and expense. These factors tend to favour the older married householder seeking prestige. The subordinate position of women in Zande society is also seen to be related to their exclusion from operating or having anything to do with the poison oracle.

When we consider to what extent social life is regulated by the poison oracle ... the customary exclusion of women ... is the most evident symptom of their inferior social position and means of maintaining it. (285)

It is not surprising, also, to find that women almost never become witch-doctors. Finally, a highly significant relation concerns the poison oracle and legal procedure.

Control of the poison oracle in all legal cases gave the princes enormous power. No death or

adultery could be legally avenged without a verdict from their oracles, so that the court was the sole medium of legal action and the king ... the sole source of law. (293)

At the time of his investigation, however, Evans-Pritchard found that the place of the poison oracle in legal procedure was somewhat reduced although it was still in use in this context.

It should be noted that in his analysis Evans-Pritchard does not postulate a projection or a reflection of the social order to the mystical plane. He deals with a system of mystical beliefs and a system of social relations which intersect at various points, but he does not explain one in terms of the other. He is content to establish relations and functions within each system and consistent, institutionalized relations between systems.

Evans-Pritchard's later writing on divination is restricted to his work in Nuer Religion (1956) where it forms a minor part of his exposition. Among the Nuer, divination always operates in terms of 'possession', where the spirits possessing prophets or 'familiars' speaking through fetishes are seen to be refractions of an all-encompassing concept of Spirit or kwoth. Evans-Pritchard believes this concept to be the key to understanding Nuer religion and philosophy and he uses it as the point of entry for analysis. In his earlier work discussed above, he used the institutions of witchcraft and divination as vehicles to reach behind to the Azande system of belief. This time, working from the inside out, he discusses divination as an extrapolation of Nuer ideas about the concept of kwoth. In other words he is led to the institution of divination, not by sociological analysis, but through the meaningful and therefore systematic complex of ideas which the Nuer themselves hold about kwoth. Then his goal is to discover, by

sociological analysis, the chief and characteristic features of the Nuer pattern of belief and action of which divination is a part.

It will be found that one or other belief, or set of beliefs, dominates the others and gives form, pattern and colour to the whole.
(Evans-Pritchard, 1956a:315)

In this instance, divination forms a minor component of the pattern.

Evans-Pritchard has thus moved from the overlapping and matching of native and observer's 'meaning' as a preliminary step in analysis, to granting priority to the indigenous meaning, which is the 'meaning' of his informants as he interprets it. Once this has been established and translated into the observer's professional frame of reference, then sociological analysis can proceed to uncover those relations which give Nuer religious belief its distinctive pattern--one that is in harmony with the social structure.

... the structural configuration we abstract by this process is of the same design as the symbolic configuration in which they think of their various kuth. The various spirits in their symbolic configurations occupy the same positions in relation to each other as they do in the structural configuration we perceive through sociological analysis. (119)

He has moved completely from function to meaning in structural analysis where societies are to be studied primarily as moral or symbolic systems. We will reserve further analysis of this change and its source for the section on religion, where its operation is more readily apparent.

Sorcery and Magic

Evans-Pritchard's (1929:619-20) first writing on magic is contained in his Ph.D. dissertation (published in 1929) where he examines those general principles of magic "deduced from Melanesian data and formulated as general laws for all societies". His purpose is to modify

these in reference to African data, specifically his own data from the Azande. His second major contribution is found in two lengthy articles published in 1933-34: the first concerns "The Intellectualist (English) Interpretation of Magic" (1933) in which he deals with what had been current anthropological notions of magic; and the second, "Levy-Bruhl's Theory of Primitive Mentality" (1934), focuses on a controversial belief about the quality of primitive thought. Taken together, they highlight the pitfalls inherent in the study of magic by Westerners to whom the matter is largely foreign and they also serve to delineate Evans-Pritchard's own frame of reference. In 1937 his study of magic and sorcery among the Azande forms the third side to a study of the 'triangle' of beliefs constituted of witchcraft, oracles and magic among that people.

In the first instance he analyzes the nature of magic in Trobriand and Azande society and finds that in each case magic is regarded "not as a force in nature, but as a cultural heritage" (Evans-Pritchard, 1929:639). The structure of magic in both societies, in terms of the spell, the material element, the rite, the conditions of the rite and the conditions of the performer, vary in accordance with the social structure of each society.

... the emphasis placed on each by the two peoples is different. (623)

And although the function of magic among the Azande is believed to be the same as that proposed by Malinowski for the Trobrianders,* the functional occasions of magic are different and are determined by the variant social

*Malinowski demonstrated how magic filled the gap left by lack of knowledge in man's practical operations and how it formed a channel for expressing human frustration.

structures.

Tylor, Frazer and Levy-Bruhl

In the first of his second set of articles, he begins by reviewing the work of Tylor and Frazer with regard to the study of magic and religion and their ideas about the relationship between magic and science. It will be remembered that both these writers were adherents of evolutionary theory and made use of the comparative method, albeit in an uncritical and somewhat haphazard manner. Evans-Pritchard's (1933b:168) main concern, however, is to assess the fruitfulness of some of their hypotheses when put to the test in the field or "which cannot be proved inductively but which have heuristic value". One of the more striking contributions which he believes that Tylor and Frazer made is contained in the conception of magic as a mistaken association of ideas. Evans-Pritchard distinguishes two propositions which he renders in these terms:

In the words and action of magic we can discern the operation of certain elementary laws of thought.... They are found to rest in perception of position and perception of similarities. (174)

This proposition he can accept without qualms, although he adds that "to tell us that magical thought rests on perception of position and similarities is not to tell us much since these are the elementary processes of all thought and it follows from the fact that magic is man-made" (175). He follows this by suggesting several procedures which would make the proposition more meaningful; for example, "by listing the particular qualities of objects which are associated in the ideology of magic" (175) in order to show which abstractions form the basis for magical notions. Another procedure might classify magical associations into elementary ideas of sensation and temporal and spatial positions,

and finally, an attempt might be made to "show whether the associations are restricted to a single cultural situation or whether it figures in a number of cultural situations" (175).

The second proposition which Evans-Pritchard draws from Tylor and Frazer deals with the belief, purportedly held by primitives, that ideal relations are real relations, that things associated in the mind are objectively associated in the real world. Evans-Pritchard rejects this hypothesis, stating that it is "illustrative of one of those perilous leaps backwards and forwards in the dark from observable social behaviour to individual psychological processes . . ." (176). He prefers to see the problem of association in terms of the social value given to objects and qualities. Whether the value be empirical or mystical, "the embodiment of this perception in a social technique is a sociological fact and requires sociological explanation" (177). Further, questions of association can only be answered by knowledge of the cultural situation in which the association is made. Careful translation of texts and repeated observations to establish the range within which a certain action may be said to be uniform are the only methods open to the anthropologist committed to an empirical approach; he believes that problems of individual motivation and perception are irrelevant to what should be the study of an objective situation. In a similar vein, the abstract discussion of the difference between magic and religion is partially resolved when the focus is on "the relations between magical behaviour and religious behaviour in specific cultures" (181).

In the second article, Levy-Bruhl's thesis that the quality of thought of primitive peoples differs from that of civilized peoples, is examined with particular reference to magic. Whereas Tylor and Frazer postulated that the primitive believes in magic because he reasons

mistakenly from his perceptions of position and similarities, Levy-Bruhl contended that "the savage reasons incorrectly because he believes in magic" (Evans-Pritchard, 1934b:37). That is:

... primitive beliefs when tested by the rules of thought laid down by logicians are found to contravene these rules.... This does not mean that savages are incapable of thinking coherently ... but it means that if we examine the patterns of belief in savage cultures we shall find they often run counter to a scientific view of the universe and contain, moreover, what a logician would call inherent contradictions. (17)

The most important of Levy-Bruhl's contributions in Evans-Pritchard's estimation is that savage patterns of belief do not imply 'cerebral inferiority' but that they represent "collective notions ... imposed on the individual from without and, therefore, are a product in his mind of faith and not of reason" (3). In this manner both Levy-Bruhl and Evans-Pritchard echo Durkheim's contention that categories of thought are socially determined and therefore common to all members of a social unit. Further, such patterns of thought ('collective representations') differ from society to society; and when one contrasts a primitive with a civilized society, the selective interests, degree of attention paid to certain things and the reasons for the attention also differ. However mistaken Levy-Bruhl may have been about the all-encompassing nature of 'mystical' thought among primitives and a similar belief about the prevalence of scientific thought among civilized peoples, Evans-Pritchard believes that in demonstrating the "social character of patterns of thought he has performed a great service to social anthropology and in our efforts to understand magic we have to start by recognizing the social character of its thought" (40). A final salient point raised by Levy-Bruhl is that "mystical thought is organized into a coherent system with a logic of its own.... No primitive society is able to maintain

equilibrium without the mystical beliefs which link together its activities by ideological bonds" (41). Evans-Pritchard applies this hypothesis most strikingly to his study of Azande magic.

Sorcery and Magic Among the Azande and Nuer

The analysis of Azande magic is a considerable and comprehensive exploration. Initially Evans-Pritchard is forced to differentiate between good magic and sorcery and this he does by defining the moral attributes of each as they are given by the Azande themselves. The first exposition of this is found in "Sorcery and Native Opinion" (1931) where his explication is to make the Zande conception of 'black' magic intelligible to colonial administrators and missionaries as well as to anthropologists. After analyzing the character of legal and illegal magic according to Azande ideas, he examines the functional role of sorcery in Zande society in terms of two propositions:

- (1) that it serves as a channel of emotional release;
- (2) that it provides a weapon for the rich and powerful to maintain their status.

He finds that only the first proposition is appropriate and states that sorcery and witchcraft serve this subjective role among the Azande. It must be noted, however, that this can scarcely be cited as a psychological explanation as Evans-Pritchard is really concerned with the classic functional explanation where the emphasis is on social order and control vis-a-vis the solidarity of society.

In 1937 he re-states Azande ideas about magic and sorcery.

Azande do not stigmatize magic as bad because it destroys the health and property of others, but because it flouts moral and legal rules. Good magic may be destructive, even lethal, but it strikes only at persons who have committed a crime, whereas bad magic is used

out of spite against men who have not broken any law or moral convention. (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:388)

This dichotomy between sorcery and good magic had been much more marked in the past than when Evans-Pritchard made his study and he found that the necessity to "identify medicines, to know their moral qualities, to understand the circumstances which define their use as a correct procedure, and to be cognizant of the social relationships between the persons concerned" (419) had become a matter of some anxiety to the Azande. Indeed the disuse of certain legal and moral sanctions (related no doubt to European influence) had brought an increase not only in magical means of redress but also in the amount and type of medicines.

In general most magical rites are performed by individuals either on their own behalf or on behalf of a client, in a multiplicity of situations and with a great number of medicines. Therefore Evans-Pritchard found that there is a lack of coherence about Zande magic that "contrasts with the general coherence and interdependence of Zande beliefs in other fields" (540). However, in connection with death, Zande ideas about witchcraft, oracles and magic combine to form an ideational system which he feels can be described in coherent terms.

Witchcraft, oracles and magic attain their height of significance, as procedures and ideologies at death. (541)

At the onset of sickness a person's relatives will mount a two-pronged attack. First, "they attack witchcraft by oracles, public warnings, approaches to the witch, making of magic, removal of the invalid to the bush and dances of witch-doctors. (second) They attack the diseases by administration of drugs, usually summoning a leech who is also a witch-doctor, in serious sickness" (541). When all measures fail and the patient dies, then vengeance magic is set in motion and the

magician chosen to implement it.

Thus death evokes the notion of witchcraft; oracles are consulted to determine the course of vengeance; magic is made to attain it; oracles decide when magic has executed vengeance; and its magical task being ended, the medicine is destroyed. (544)

The triangular aspect of the Zande system of belief is thus closed; magic then is seen to have a logical relation to both witchcraft and the oracles as well as functioning to strengthen belief in them. In the final analysis of the monograph as a whole we find that although he provides a functional analysis of the three segments of belief, his primary concern is to demonstrate logical relationships which form this coherent system of belief.

Although the system of magic intersects the social structure at many points, due to the individualistic nature of its techniques and the variety of situations where it may be employed, in some of its aspects it is restricted to certain groups. Most magic belongs to the males: "magic gives power which is best in the hands of men" (427). Owners of magic are usually found among the old or middle-aged men, while princes and courtiers make much less use of it than do the ' provincials'. Vengeance magic, however, is supported by political authority.* As with witchcraft and the oracles it is seen to have an harmonious relation to the social structure generally.

Writing later about magic among the Nuer, Evans-Pritchard (1956a:95) treats it as he does divination among the Nuer; it is seen initially in terms of the Nuer system of meaning.

The rites these people perform might be classed, according to some definition of the term, as

*See the previous section on the relation of the oracles and vengeance to legal procedure.

magic but in Nuer classification, which is the one we have to follow if we are to delineate their thought and not our own, we are still concerned with a relationship between man and kwoth.

Magical techniques therefore are held to be activities related to particular refractions of the concept of Spirit. And as the Nuer do not hold all manifestations of Spirit as equal, the possession of 'magical' powers is believed to be of little importance.

The use of fetishes and the power inherent in them, however, is a recent innovation in Nuer culture and it is regarded in a hostile and ambivalent manner.

... here is something that has entered into Nuerland with the reputation of being mobile and of having lethal powers, attributes which the Nuer can only think of in terms of their own culture as Spirit in some form or other, and yet it is used for private ends that they regard with disfavour sufficient to consider that homicide caused by it requires vengeance. (103)

Evans-Pritchard finds that the Nuer are confused by what they see as a foreign influence and that "they have tried, not entirely successfully, to assimilate these Sudanic medicines ... to their traditional way of thinking, to their conception of Spirit" (100). In general, the sparing use of medicines among the Nuer is in sharp contrast to the proliferation of medicines and the opportunities for their use among the Azande. Traditionally among the Nuer the use of a small number of medicines was believed to be effective in minor matters only or as secondary to a religious rite; prayer and sacrifice were regarded as the only truly efficacious means to heal a serious breach of interdiction or a virulent sickness.

In summary, then, as the Nuer see 'magic' in relation to Spirit and subordinate to 'religious' practices, Evans-Pritchard is led to treat

it as a minor component in their belief system.

Evans-Pritchard's mature ideas about a structural analysis of magic, first utilized with Nuer data, receive more explicit treatment in Theories of Primitive Religion (1965). At this point he states unequivocally that a truly scientific method eschews the search for both origins and essences; rather, the focus must be on relations, and in this case, the relations of magic "to empirical activities ... (and in) relation to other beliefs, as part of a system of thought; for it is certainly often the case that it is primarily not so much a means of controlling nature as of preventing witchcraft and other mystical forces operating against human endeavour by interfering with the empirical measures taken to attain an end" (Evans-Pritchard, 1965a:111). When the relationship of magic to other beliefs is established within a coherent system, then the system must be seen in relation to other systems, "as part of a wider set of relations" (112). The patterns discerned in the totality of a culture and society may then be compared with the patterns abstracted from other cultures and societies. Only at this point would it be possible to make some general statements about the institution of magic generally. Evans-Pritchard (1963:34) has said of himself that he has been primarily concerned with the earlier steps of analysis.

Perhaps I should regard myself first as an ethnographer and secondly as a social anthropologist, because I believe that a proper understanding of the ethnographic facts must come before any really scientific analysis.

We may note, in passing, that such a commitment resembles that of another prominent anthropologist, Franz Boas. Although their theoretical views would not be in accord, they seem to have shared both the temperament and passion for engaging in systematic field work.

CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGION

As a topic for study 'religion' forms a major segment of Evans-Pritchard's writing over the years. In 1936 he published "Zande Theology" followed by a great number of articles on various aspects of Nuer religion, dating from 1940 to 1956. These, mainly at the ethnographic level of abstraction, were incorporated into a major monograph, Nuer Religion published in 1956. In addition, he provided an article on "Religion" in the Institutions of Primitive Society (1956), another on "Religion and the Anthropologists" in Blackfriars (1959) and finally Theories of Primitive Religion (1965) as well as numerous references to the topic in his general works on social anthropology. It is proposed to deal with his treatment of the topic primarily in terms of the data relating to his field work among the Azande and the Nuer, referring to his more general statements only in the interests of clarity.

In the monograph, Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande, Evans-Pritchard (1937:3) finds it necessary to state his reasons for excluding 'religion' from his discussion, "since magic and religion are generally grouped together in theoretical discussions". Apparently religious beliefs, such as the Zande cult of the dead or the belief in a Supreme Being, are closely related to family life, "so that Zande religion will more fitly be described in connexion with domestic life" (3). We may ask, however, on what grounds Evans-Pritchard distinguishes magical and religious beliefs and activities. For a clue to his position we may refer to his article on "The Intellectualist (English) Interpretation of Magic" where he states: "Tylor and Frazer defined religion much more

clearly than they defined magic and their division ... may be used as a convenient starting point for more intensive research" (Evans-Pritchard, 1933b:182). He paraphrases their definitions thus:

Religion according to Frazer is: 'A propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life. Thus defined, religion consists of two elements, a theoretical and a practical, namely a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them'.
(160-1)

We may take this as the implicit definition of religion utilized by Evans-Pritchard as I have been unable to find any other expressed in his writings.

Zande Theology

It is clear, however, that this can only be used as a general referent in Azande studies because of the "amorphous, indefinite, character of the facts themselves ..." (Evans-Pritchard, 1936a:163). Indeed, the situations in which the Azande act towards their Supreme Being, Mbori, speak of him and relate their ideas about him to other aspects of their belief systems are so rare and vague that such a definition is questionable in its validity and the whole matter allows "emotional and intellectual selection on the part of observers" (163). Because of this, he feels that he cannot analyze beyond recording actual observation of ritual, supplemented by native accounts and systematic enquiries from regular informants. In his use of data from the latter, however, he is fully aware of the dangers inherent in accepting information from Azande who have studied at a mission school or been in residence at Government centres, "for they may unwittingly substitute Christian or Moslem ideas for the vague beliefs of their own culture, beliefs which are moreover the expression of age rather than youth"

(165). As a check on his own findings he makes extensive use of the work of two other researchers in the same field, although he finds that much of their interpretations is untenable in the light of the facts as he knows them. "In my opinion Mgr. Lagae and Captain Philipps have inferred from Zande behaviour a doctrine by which they then proceed to explain the behaviour" (197). Evans-Pritchard, on the other hand, proceeds from behaviour, which includes statements of belief, towards institutions and then exposes the doctrine or system of belief lying behind these institutions.

Among Azande Evans-Pritchard finds that in prayers, the giving of personal names and in a ceremony performed in times of drought and pestilence, the Supreme Being, Mbori, is seen to play a part. However, even in perilous times "their speech and behaviour furnish no evidences that we are able to co-ordinate into a coherent conception of a deity" (187). There are some natural phenomena which are explained by reference to Mbori (for example, holes in rocky outcrops) and also a vague belief that attributes to Mbori all natural phenomena. But on the whole Evans-Pritchard finds that he "searched in vain for dogma and ... found Azande bored by the subject of Mbori and unable to express more than the vaguest ideas about him ..." (197).

He does attempt, however, to interpret his meagre findings and is able to uncover a series of relationships between religious categories of belief and action. He finds that Mbori seems to furnish the ultimate resource when all other resources fail; he also discovers that the notion of Mbori seems to be a "vague, generalized unity of the ghosts of the departed" (199) in that the genealogically distant appear to fade into the idea of Mbori; he also sees a relationship between Mbori and moral regulations and though "he is not thought to be the direct retributive

agent in breach of custom, he is nevertheless felt to be a distant and final sanction" (200). There is also a logical relationship--through death--to witchcraft, oracles and magic. Even if Mbori permits death as the natural end of a life, vengeance must still be enacted against the witch who is believed to have administered the final push.

Both the natural cause, age and the accessory factor of the Supreme Being's encouragement, are thrust into the background by the necessity of vengeance which requires a notion of witchcraft as the cause of all deaths.... Whatever may be the participating cause witchcraft is always the agent which provokes retaliation. (175)

In an attempt to grasp the system of beliefs, or theology, which the Azande hold about their Supreme Being, Mbori, Evans-Pritchard seeks to uncover in much the same manner as in his first major monograph what he calls logico-emotional relationships between such religious beliefs and between these and beliefs about witchcraft. The term, logico-emotional, first introduced here, can be seen, I believe, as one indication of his growing interest in the actors' system of meaning.

Nuer Religion

One of the most striking changes in analysis in Nuer Religion is this emphasis on indigenous meaning. The second is the frequent allusion to Old Testament conceptions of God and His relationships with man in the process of interpreting Nuer meanings of kwoth and Nuer relationships to Spirit. For example, when discussing Nuer resignation in the face of death or misfortune, he says:

I cannot convey the Nuer attitude better than by quoting the Book of Job: 'the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord'. (Evans-Pritchard, 1956a:13)

When discussing the nature of the Nuer God, he states:

Spirit thought of in such a manner--as creator,

father, judge and so forth--... has a general correspondence to what we understand by God.
(28)

There is a relation between these two factors: in utilizing such comparisons and by emphasizing interpretation over translation, particularly as interpretation was spread over twenty years, he is laying himself open to the charge that, although he believes Biblical terms may best express the meaning of some Nuer concepts because of their familiarity, he may be interpreting the meaning of Nuer concepts to fit Biblical terms.

At this point we face one of the problems resulting from building an abstract structure on indigenous 'meaning' alone. The fact that native concepts must be rendered into another set of concepts familiar to the reader means that they must filter through two interpretive processes--that of the anthropologist and that of the reader. Can we then state that the meaning has been faithfully reproduced at the end of these processes? A further problem relates to the source of the information itself. Can we be sure that the information on which the system of meaning is built is truly representative of the social and cultural unit under study? This is particularly apposite in the case of the Nuer and Evans-Pritchard. In his Preface he indicates that he was obliged to focus on collecting information about language, subsistence, kinship and politics.

These tasks, all the heavier in the arduous conditions in which they had to be carried out, left me little time to pursue anything which could be called a systematic inquiry into religious matters. (v)

Taken in conjunction with what he admitted in his Introduction to The Nuer about the sparsity of confidential conversations and the lack of trained informants, would suggest that he had considerable difficulty in obtaining what would normally be considered reliable data. We may also

note that the lack of "dogma, liturgy and sacraments (in sensu strictu) and ... a developed religious cult and mythology"(v) prevented the checking of spontaneous and casual statements by reference to a well-known body of lore or by repeated observation of ceremonies. It is not surprising that the book abounds with references to sources other than his own, and we must rely on his assessment of their accuracy and reliability.

With respect to the accuracy of the original information some additional points may be made. There seem to be significant regional differences between groups of Nuer.

... there were special difficulties in the case of the spirits of the air. They are much more prominent to the west than to the east of the Nile where I spent most of my time. (28)

Added to this problem is that of the absorption of Dinka elements in some areas.

... the Atwot, to the West of the Nile, appear to be a Nuer tribe who have adopted many Dinka habits, while the Jikany tribes of Nuerland are said to be of Dinka origin. (Evans-Pritchard, 1940:4)

Finally, mention must be made of the hostility of the Government, which was particularly intense towards the prophets of the spirits of the air.

Nuer, who at the best of times are reticent when asked about their spirits, were consequently embarrassed and taciturn when the subject was mentioned. (Evans-Pritchard, 1956a:29)

It may be of interest to turn to Navaho Witchcraft and quote what Kluckhohn (1944:14) had to say about eliciting information from reluctant informants.

I have found that Navaho hitch-hikers whom I picked up when I was alone in my car were often surprisingly willing to discuss witchcraft in spite of the fact that they had never seen me before. Indeed, I am sure that it was because

they had never seen me before and anticipated that they would never see me again that they were ready to talk. (emphasis mine)

We may contrast this with Evans-Pritchard's known connection with an hostile Government. Taking all these points into consideration it is not unreasonable to challenge the 'meaning' which Evans-Pritchard imputes to Nuer religion.

Enough has been said, I believe, to highlight some of the difficulties inherent in this approach however fruitful its incorporation may appear to be. And these points must be raised because the major portion of Nuer Religion is given over to the search for indigenous meaning.

Evans-Pritchard begins by describing the nature of Spirit or kwoth, the nature of the relationship between man and Spirit and His intervention in human affairs as it pertains to wrongdoing, sickness, misfortune and suffering. He translates Nuer statements about such matters, including what is said in prayers, and then interprets what he believes is revealed about kwoth. He concludes that the Nuer see "the ills they wish to be delivered from as due to faults and they think they can only be avoided by keeping in the right in their dealings with God and men. These two ideas ... are basic to their religious thought and they are also, of course, complementary" (Evans-Pritchard, 1956a:27).

In addition to kwoth there are two other categories of spirits, kuth nhial, spirits of the above and held to be closest to God, and kuth piny, spirits of the below held in lesser esteem. He deals initially with the relationships of these spirits to Nuer social life and finds in such relationships how Spirit is "refracted by the social structure" (62). The following two quotations give an example of how he establishes these relationships.

... the totemic and totemistic spirits ... are also patrons of lineages, families and persons and of significance only for those lineages, families and persons to whom they stand in a tutelary relationship. (62)

And:

The reason why some of the refractions have distinguishing names is, I think, mainly a matter of ownership.... All the various spirits may be owned by persons.... The spirit gets its name ... by being owned by the person it possesses.... (117)

But this depends, in turn, on the relation of the spirits to God.

The spirits are not each other, but they are all God in different figures.... Nuer pass without difficulty or hesitation from a more general and comprehensive way of conceiving God or Spirit to a more particular and limited way ... and back again. (52)

By relating these different 'spiritual' aspects, Evans-Pritchard discovers the inherent unity and diversity which constitute a logical and meaningful conception of kwoth to the Nuer. Moreover, by abstracting structural relations in the social sphere he finds that there is a similar structural design in the religious system.

Given the segmentary political and lineage structure of the Nuer it is understandable that the same complementary tendencies towards fission and fusion and the same relativity that we find in the structure are found also in the action of Spirit in the social life.... It is intelligible, therefore, that in its relation to the segmentary social order the conception of Spirit is broken up into diverse refractions, while in relation to nature and man in general the many become again the one. (115)

From dealing with structural relations among ideas, Evans-Pritchard then considers how these are represented materially and finds that the spirits of the below cannot be thought of "except in relation to the things by reference to which they derive their individuality and which are said 'to be' them" (126). The most renowned

exposition of the problem of symbols concerns the Nuer statement that twins are birds. Far from exemplifying what Levy-Bruhl postulated as 'prelogical mentality' (see Levi-Strauss, C., 1962, for fuller discussion of this problem), Evans-Pritchard states that such affirmations "appear quite sensible, and even true, to one who presents the idea to himself in Nuer language and within their system of religious thought" (131). Besides being men and women, twins are the "special revelation of Spirit ... because twins and birds, though for different reasons, are both associated with Spirit ... and hence a bird (is) a suitable symbol in which to express the special relationship in which a twin stands to God" (133). Therefore, whether it be the identification of twins with birds, a man with an ox in sacrifice, a man's herd with the ancestor of his clan, Evans-Pritchard asserts that the Nuer are not mistaking ideal relations for real relations. In certain situations a dimension is added to real things to form a triadic relationship with Spirit. It is only when such a dimension is added that there is an ideal equivalence, so that "a crocodile is equivalent to a Spirit only when conceived of as a representation of God to a lineage" (142).

Working through the relations of Spirit to ideas about man and the reciprocal relations between man and Spirit in which are found ideas about right, wrong and sin, Evans-Pritchard is led to the institution of sacrifice. This is the central act of Nuer religion in both its personal and collective forms. Into it are woven all the ideational strands, the dominant elements of which are the piacular nature of sacrifice and the disposition of the performers to be in the right relationship with Spirit and man. The change in technique from his Azande studies is thus clearly exposed; there, he focused on the institution of witchcraft, discovering the ideas which led into it and formed a coherent system to the Azande.

Here, the institution of sacrifice can only be approached after the nature of Spirit is understood in Nuer terms and the relations between the constituent elements exposed and related by sociological analysis to the social structure. Then it becomes apparent to Evans-Pritchard that:

... though Nuer religious activity is part of their social life and takes place within it they conceive it as expressing essentially a relationship between man and something which lies right outside his society; and it is, therefore, within the framework of that conception that our study of their religion has to be made and its central act of sacrifice understood. (286)

Evans-Pritchard has treated Nuer religion as a system primarily in and of itself. However, in line with his conception of structure and design, he proposes that his analysis is but a preliminary step to a more meaningful sociological analysis. By widening the range of subject matter to include philosophy or Weltanschauung and by finding the pattern and dominant motifs among the various phenomena which constitute Nuer Weltanschauung, he finds it to be "essentially of a religious kind and is dominated by the idea of kwoth, Spirit" (315). In a similar manner he proposes that other African philosophies be studied for the purpose of classification "on the basis of which comparative studies can be undertaken which possibly may lead to some general conclusions" (315). He believes that the way to achieve this is to proceed inductively from the facts as they appear to the people under study, to interpret, to establish relations and to seek patterns. No a priori assumptions are to be posited on the facts, such as the difference between magic and religion or the evolution of religion through magic. And "the test of what is the dominant motif is usually, perhaps always, to what a people attribute dangers, sickness and other misfortunes and what steps they take to avoid or eliminate them" (315).

It should be emphasized again that in his search for meaning Evans-Pritchard is not utilizing or seeking psychological facts; that is, he is not looking for 'subjective meaning', that which is present in the mind of the individual actor, or presumed to lie therein. His approach is still normative in that he seeks a system of meaning, a system, moreover, which forms "a pattern which excludes conflicting elements and subordinates each part to the harmony of the whole" (318). That the whole is now seen in terms of a moral or symbolic system rather than a 'natural' system does not alter the fact of it being a system whose structure contributes to the maintenance of social order. But we may ask if his structural analysis tends to negate or obscure whatever insights he believed he obtained from focusing on the 'meaning' of Nuer religion. The high level of abstraction involved moves his analysis rather a long way from cultural reality. Further, as his concept of structure is limited to those critical relations necessary for the existence of the system, could he be accused of arbitrarily selecting some elements and omitting others? And finally, by treating his data in terms of a religious system, can we speculate that he may have placed limitations on the contextual situation when translating and interpreting?

By his analysis of the Nuer religious system, however, it is apparent that the analytical and somewhat static model of society, inherited from Durkheim, is being modified in three significant respects. First, Evans-Pritchard distinguishes between the personal and collective aspects of religion, stating:

If we recognise that the collective expression is only one form of religious activity we shall not make the mistake of trying to explain Nuer religion in terms of their social structure alone.
(320)

By this admission he rejects Durkheim's assertion that "the religious

conceptions of primitive peoples are nothing more than a symbolic representation of the social order" (313). Second, in his discussion of prophets among the Nuer, he admits the relevance of a diachronic perspective, limited though this may be. The appearance of the prophets seems to coincide with the influence of foreign peoples and the spread of Mahdism. Nuer response was made "within a set of religious conceptions and has, therefore, a significance for the study of these conceptions ..." (310) in that it forms part of the current ideology. Bound up with the incorporation of time in analysis is the use of an individual phenomenon, both in the sense of an unique event--the rise of prophets--and in the sense that an individual person--a prophet--can bring changes of tribal importance.

For the first time a single person symbolized ... the unity of the tribe, for prophets are tribal figures. But they have a further significance, for their influence extended over tribal boundaries. (Evans-Pritchard, 1940:189)

Can we see in these changes an explicit recognition of the paradox of social life--a paradox in which the coercive and creative power of society on individuals is juxtaposed with the changes and modifications which individuals may effect on the forms of that same society?

To what source or sources can we attribute these changes? In asking this question it is emphasized that we are not seeking explanations --an impossible task at such a distance from the subject--but hope rather to postulate relationships between conditions and events, relationships which may be drawn from particular facts.

We may begin, I think, with Evans-Pritchard's training in anthropology under Malinowski, particularly with regard to the importance of language in ethnographic analysis. J. R. Firth writes of Malinowski: "His main interest ... was in the problem of meaning ... (and) the key

concept ... was the notion of context of situation" (Firth, R., 1964:102). Committed, however, to a functional and pragmatic approach, Malinowski preferred to see language as a "mode of action rather than as a countersign of thought" (94), and tied it firmly to institutions. In his Azande studies it would seem that Evans-Pritchard also favoured this approach, although his goal was ultimately the problem of the relations between ideas. We should remember that his contact with the Azande was limited within the bounds of being an outsider and superior, and therefore language as a guide to action was probably an indispensable dimension of his field work. He was aided in this by the availability of trained and regular informants. Among the Nuer he did not have the use of trained informants--indeed of any regular informants--and his recording of and participation in the daily life of the cattle camp led, in his own evaluation, to an emphasis on values or sentiments. It seems likely that in such a situation "the French conception of langue as a function of the collectivité" (95) would predominate. His approach to institutions in the Nuer religious system therefore was through the "collective consciousness" expressed linguistically and conceptually. And we should remember "Durkheim's great body of work with its emphatic and elaborate analysis of moral obligation and the moral character of consensus" (Firth, R., 1953:147).

It seems possible to suggest, therefore, that the variant conditions of field work were one factor in Evans-Pritchard's change of emphasis from function to meaning.

Closely related to field work conditions, of course, is the time factor, that is, the period when a society is being studied. It is interesting to speculate that if prophets had not played such an important politico-religious role in Nuerland would Evans-Pritchard have

felt the necessity for invoking historical explanations. Being confronted with such a departure from the priestly institution of the traditional social order, he seems impelled to admit "that their appearance might be explained by historical events" (Evans-Pritchard, 1956a:309). In the Marett Lecture of 1950 he discusses the value of history not only in studying diachronic problems but in providing "an experimental situation" (Evans-Pritchard, 1962:21). In the case of the Nuer both these aspects are utilized, as he finds in the appearance of prophets support for his thesis that the "notion of Spirit lends itself to refraction without limits" (Evans-Pritchard, 1956a:310).

It is left to account for his emphasis on the personal side of Nuer religion. In his concluding paragraph he says that "... Nuer religion is ultimately an interior state. This state is externalized in rites which we can observe, but their meaning depends finally on an awareness of God and that men are dependent on Him and must be resigned to His will" (322). Without a recognition of this dimension of experience, he does not believe that any explanations of the religions of primitives are of much value to one who, like himself, assumes the reality of "spiritual being" (Evans-Pritchard, 1965a:121). In Theories of Primitive Religion he concludes a discussion of various explanations in the following, and highly revealing, terms:

As far as a study of religion as a factor in social life is concerned, it may make little difference whether the anthropologist is a theist or an atheist, since in either case he can only take into account what he can observe. But if either attempts to go further than this, each must pursue a different path. The non-believer seeks for some theory--biological, psychological, or sociological--which will explain the illusion; the believer seeks rather to understand the manner in which a people conceives of a reality and their relations to

it. For both, religion is a part of social life, but for the believer it has also another dimension. (121)

From my understanding of this passage and from the impression gained from reading Nuer Religion, I am convinced that Evans-Pritchard's apparent growing interest in a set of Christian beliefs and practices affected his anthropological writing on the subject of religion. In tracing the emphasis on the personal aspects of religion and in the search for understanding of a people's conception of spiritual reality, it seems logical to posit that his own religious experience provided one important factor.

Religion and Politics

Although Evans-Pritchard has shown considerable interest in both religion and politics over the years, the writings in which these topics are specifically combined are few. His Frazer Lecture of 1948 was devoted to "The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan" and in the following year he published The Sanusi of Cyrenaica (1949), an historical account of the development of a Muslim religious fraternity into a political and economic organization. The first work is based primarily on the literature rather than on field work, while the latter grew out of his wartime experiences as Political Officer in Cyrenaica.

In examining kingship among the Shilluk, Evans-Pritchard is testing Frazer's thesis that the king, or man-god on whom the course of nature is dependent, must be killed whenever it is apparent that his powers are beginning to fail. A vigorous successor must be installed before the powers are threatened with decay. By looking at the problem as one of social structure, and noting the correspondence of the political structure with the religious cult of Nyikang, the semi-divine culture

hero of the Shilluk people, he reaches the following conclusion. The traditional belief that the king may be killed is a symbolic expression on the mystical plane of the realities of political life. Although kingship is the common symbol of the Shilluk people, it is not "great enough to eliminate the powerful tendencies towards fission in the structure ..." (Evans-Pritchard, 1948:85). Kingship then embodies unity and diversity, "a contradiction between dogma and social facts, in a sense between office and person, which is produced by a combination of centripetal and centrifugal tendencies in the national structure ..." (85).

It is possible to see in his later work, The Sanusi of Cyrenaica, a continuing interest in the spectrum of problems, raised initially by Frazer in The Golden Bough, dealing with the sacerdotal nature of kingship. The former, however, deals not with death and succession but with a wider aspect: how does a priest or holy man become a ruler or king? We should note that in this case Evans-Pritchard is not asking how the religious and political systems are interrelated, but how they came to be interrelated, essentially a problem involving an historical perspective.

Posing the question in this way was a radical departure from a theoretical tradition which emphasized social order and equilibrium and eschewed the relevance of history. We may recall what Radcliffe-Brown (1965:3) said about the aims of social anthropology in 1952:

Comparative sociology, of which social anthropology is a branch, is here conceived as a theoretical or nomothetic study of which the aim is to provide acceptable generalizations. The theoretical understanding of a particular institution is its interpretation in the light of such generalizations.

Malinowski's (1960:117) theory of needs precluded the use of historical

data or a diachronic perspective.

... history explains nothing unless it can be shown that an historical happening has had full scientific determination, and that we can document this determination on the basis of well-documented data.

Thus with regard to the commonly held aims of social anthropology (the eliciting of laws or generalizations), and to methodology (structure and function), history, both in terms of data and perspective, was deemed irrelevant. And irrelevant it was to those committed to viewing society as a 'natural system', intelligible in terms of natural laws.

We should not forget, however, that prior to World War II the societies studied by structural/functionalists were those that possessed a 'tradition' but rarely a well-documented history. In the effort to avoid 'conjectural' history, Evans-Pritchard (1950b:21) believes that they threw out both "the bath water of presumptive history" and the "baby of valid history". But was this not cogent reasoning on the part of the inductively oriented anthropologists of the time? Complex, heterogeneous communities with attested historical records were not the units of study; the primitive isolate, with its rich mixture of fact and fancy embodied in myth, but without a recorded history, was the focus of studies. Within the bounds of that primitive isolate and at the time of study were to be found all the necessary relations for a description of how things work. We should not fail to note also that the emphasis on 'how things work' can be seen with respect to British colonial policy and the attempt to maintain social order.

It is suggested that this provides an example of the inter-relatedness of the several factors which contribute to the establishment and maintenance of a theoretical tradition. Field work experiences and conditions, the timing of these, global events and their impingement on

primitive societies, all combine to reinforce or change the direction of theoretical positions and possibilities. For example, Timasheff (1955: 106) has referred the nature of Durkheim's work, with its interest in group solidarity, to "his birth in the most nationalistic section of France, his early contacts with the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War, and his identification with the strongly cohesive Jewish minority...." By employing a similar perspective, the appearance of The Sanusi of Cyrenaica can be seen as a response to changing conditions.

Evans-Pritchard (1949:4) deals initially with the nature of the mystical content of the Sanusiya, stressing that "its insistence on conformity to the original teachings of the Prophet meant that the faith and morals which the Prophet preached to the Bedouin of his day, and which they accepted, were equally suited to the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, who in all essentials were leading, and still lead, a life like to that of the Bedouin in Arabia in the seventh century". His primary concern, however, is to show the origin of the Order and its spatial and temporal development after it took root in Cyrenaica, rather than to explore the intricacies of its religious beliefs. (In this aspect he departs from his Azande and Nuer writings.) Then by abstracting its structural relations he proposes to follow the process by which they were fitted into the Bedouin social structure, to examine how religious authority became political authority.

He finds the following factors to be of primary importance in this process. First, the doctrines and observances of the Order were already familiar to the Bedouin as well as the existence of Marabat and their role as mediators in tribal disputes. The Grand Sanusi was revered primarily because he was Marabtin and the possessor of baraka. Second, the Order possessed a clearly defined organization:

The tribes of Cyrenaica became through the Order linked from above in a common, if loose, organization under a single, sacred, Head. This was possible only because a tribal system already existed uniting the different tribes, in spite of their feuds and enmities, into a society which, though lacking political unity, rested on common sentiments, a common way of life, and a common lineage structure. (69)

Third, the existence of external hostility, provided first by the Turks and then the Italians, served to weld the diverse segments into a nation. Evans-Pritchard follows the latter process through the Turkish Administration, the two Italo-Sanusi wars, Italian rule and colonization until finally, during World War II, the "little Sanusi army fought under its own flag and Arab commissions in it were in the name of the Amir" (227). During the years from 1856 to 1943 the political functions of the Order increased so that during Italian domination it became more and more "a political organization which directed, administratively, economically, and militarily, the entire Bedouin population, and morally the entire population of Cyrenaica, Bedouin and townsmen alike, against the common enemy" (228).

This work, in its conception and general approach, would seem to form the bridge over which Evans-Pritchard passed from a view of society susceptible to analysis by the methods of the natural sciences to one which implies that society is a moral system. This change entails "a turning towards humanistic disciplines, especially towards history, and particularly towards social history or the history of institutions, of cultures and of ideas" (Evans-Pritchard, 1950b:28). In The Sanusi of Cyrenaica social history is injected into the structural analysis of a contemporary problem in order to give fuller understanding. In this process, however, it should be noted that the focus is on certain aspects of the Order, those which gave rise to political organization, and not on

the total system; and we may properly ask, I think, if his analysis lacks the recognition of other factors which may have played an important role in the successful amalgamation of the Bedouin and the Sanusiya.

CHAPTER FIVE
EVANS-PRITCHARD AND BRITISH SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In a previous chapter we traced the development of British anthropology with a special emphasis on the ideas, theories and methodologies that relate to problems of social behaviour and the institutions which direct and restrict such behaviour. Our brief excursion into the past served to erect a framework within which studies of religion and magic by some British writers might be examined. Our purpose now is to place the work of Evans-Pritchard in this perspective, to postulate its theoretical sources and those of the changes we have discovered in his writings and to assess the fruitfulness of such changes in terms of the provision of testable hypotheses. And although we plan to focus on Evans-Pritchard's studies of religion and related topics, examination of these will, no doubt, throw light on his work in general.

Evolutionism and Functionalism

It should be emphasized that a good deal of anthropological theorizing about religion after the early years of the twentieth century arose as a reaction against some of the evolutionary writers of the nineteenth century. These writers had been confident that not only could they define religion, magic and associated topics, but that they could uncover their origins and disclose their essences. Many of the theories were not only based on cognitive, rationalist and emotionalist assumptions about the nature of primitive man and the quality of his thought, but also on a deductive scheme of logical development. Into this scheme were fed examples from many societies, examples taken out of context and, in their

sources, highly suspect by contemporary standards. Under the influence of Continental writers most of these ideas, assumptions and theories were to be swept away. Malinowski was among the first to outmode "by ridicule and example both the sort of inquiries which had previously been prosecuted among the simpler peoples and the use scholars had made of them" (Evans-Pritchard, 1965:9) and to substitute an empirical, normative approach to be operated within a rigorously controlled comparative framework. Theories and concepts were to be promulgated in such hypotheses as were amenable to testing in the field, giving rise to an emphasis on field work.

Some of the ideas of these early writers, however, were carried over into the new analytical structural/functional model. First, there was the view, often implicit, of the rationality of mankind. This is a continuous thread running through Evans-Pritchard's work on religion, appearing early as a polemic against such writers as Levy-Bruhl and Pareto. It also has relations with other factors which concern the administration of colonial policy and the social interaction between government personnel and native peoples. He is concerned to show that native peoples do act rationally within their own systems of thought and belief. This attitude is more conspicuous in his earlier work which dealt with magic and witchcraft; the demonstration of rationality in his later writing on religion seems bound up with a more humanistic viewpoint. He says that man, "being a reasonable creature, has to live in a world in which his relations with those around him are ordered and intelligible. Naturally I think that those who see things in this way have a clearer understanding of social reality than the others ..." (Evans-Pritchard, 1950b:28). This also implies, I believe, that he holds that social anthropology must not limit itself to a segment of humanity,

primitive, preliterate or stateless, but must encompass the social realities of cultures and societies of all places both past and present.

Some of the concepts proposed by earlier writers also continued in use, although they became increasingly subject to critical attack. Among these can be cited the examples of mana, totemism, animism, the supernatural, witchcraft and the difference between religion and magic. Central to this problem, of course, is the matter of translation to which the structural/functionalists, beginning with Malinowski, were to pay considerable attention. Field experience, with its concomitant obligation to work in a foreign language, pointed clearly to the fact that Christianity had provided the models when earlier scholars proposed their definitions. However, as 'function' became the rallying-cry, attention became diverted to what religion, magic and so on did in a society rather than at what they were. Thus these phenomena were seen as integrative, instrumental or divisive with reference to the functional unity of a society and the tendency was to continue to operate with some previous definitions and concepts. In fact, in 1940, Raymond Firth (1940:483) was to write:

Despite sixty years of discussion and a bulky literature the controversies that have raged round the meaning of the Oceanic term mana and its related concepts are still far from settled.

Evans-Pritchard (1937:8, 12), on the other hand, has been keenly aware of this problem; in his early work on witchcraft, oracles and magic, he sets out to "make a number of English words stand for Zande notions", cautioning that "our categories are intended to class only certain notions--those that assert or assume facts that can be said to be in accord with experience or otherwise...." In other words, the concepts should arise from the facts as they appear in each society rather than

the facts being applied to the concepts.

The Problem of Assumptions

One of the basic difficulties is the attitude of the anthropologist towards magico-religious ideas in general, in terms of the assumptions he brings to the problem--assumptions which may be both personal and anthropological in nature. It is debatable, however, if these types of assumptions can indeed be separated. Firth (1959:136) has pointed out that some anthropologists refer religion to the "complex nature of man and the demands of his social existence", while others see "symbolic statements referring to universal truths beyond the human physical and mental sphere altogether". Evans-Pritchard (1956a:vii) is also aware of the problem of assumptions. He suggests that many anthropologists unwittingly adopt a theological position, usually a negative one, which affects their analysis, while those "who give assent to the religious beliefs of their own people feel and think, and therefore also write differently about the beliefs of other peoples from those who do not give assent to them". As noted in the previous chapter, he himself endeavours to comprehend the reality of 'spiritual being' perceived by other peoples and presumably would fall into Firth's second category. How then can one avoid preconceived ideas about religious phenomena? If, as Evans-Pritchard seems to suggest, this is not possible at the present time, one way out of the dilemma is to indicate clearly the fundamental assumptions brought to any study of religion. This is Firth's solution and we note that Evans-Pritchard seems to concur by doing this in his Preface to Nuer Religion. In dealing with the category of magico-religious beliefs, one could postulate that witchcraft and magic might be approached more 'objectively' than religion, as the former

are less familiar to Western ideologies and carry less emotional connotations while the latter is still with us, whether one has a commitment or an antipathy to the notion. Indeed, the emotional content of antipathy may exceed that of commitment!

Structural-Functional Studies

When the structural/functional model of society was well established, interest in religion as a system in and of itself declined. The concern became mainly for the "consequences of religious practices for social arrangements and for the humans among whom these prevail" (Schneider, 1964:54). This may be attributed in part to a reaction against the intellectualist writings of earlier times which focused on thought and the reasoning process in the religious context. The work of Tylor, Levy-Bruhl and Mueller provide good examples. Now attention was directed towards religious practices rather than beliefs or processes of thought. In "Religion and Society" (1945) Radcliffe-Brown (1964:80) summarized the functional outlook in such studies by declaring that "religion must ... be studied in action", that the examination of "religious actions, the ceremonies and the collective ... or individual rites" must precede any examination of sentiments or moral dispositions. A precedent for such a view can be found, in part, in an earlier work by Robertson Smith, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, published in 1889. Here the point was made that "in the study of Semitic religion, we must not begin by asking what was told about the gods, but what the working religious institutions were, and how they shaped the lives of the worshippers" (Robertson Smith, 1964:84). This position was taken because he believed that primitive and ancient religions did not have established creeds and that the meanings attached to religious practices were vague.

On the other hand, Radcliffe-Brown's (1964:66) position is that, while he believes the "actions themselves are symbolic expressions of sentiments", the more significant point is that the rites have a "specific social function when, and to the extent that, they have for their effect to regulate, maintain and transmit from one generation to another sentiments on which the constitution of the society depends".

What are the consequences of such a stance for the study of religion? First, it tends to produce criteria for evaluating religious practices and beliefs in terms of the preservation of the equilibrium or maintenance of a social system; thus the eufunctional nature of these practices may be unduly stressed. But in actual fact, "... religion has often involved or encouraged such things as strife and war and cruelty and the like ..." (Schneider, 1964:55). Witchcraft beliefs and activities may also cause extreme anxiety and stress to the individual and to the social system. Second, the emphasis on eufunction and functional unity may limit the observation and range of view of religious matters.

Not only is the postulate of functional unity often contrary to fact, but it has little heuristic value, since it diverts the analyst's attention from possible disparate consequences of a given social or cultural item ... for diverse groups and for the individual members of these groups. (Merton, 1964:117)

Thus, while it may be possible to grant functional unity to small, preliterate societies, at least in theory, "this unity of the total society cannot be usefully posited in advance of observation" (119). Third, by focusing on practice and by assuming that practice reflects sentiments, ideas and beliefs may not be recognized as having "a way of taking on independence ... and undergoing great elaboration of their own. In developed, elaborated form they may have tremendous influence on human beings, and question of their truth-value may become extremely important

to the latter--and this importance to the latter is something the sociologist would be most unwise to leave out of the account" (Schneider, 1964:58). Fourth, the emphasis on the integrative and preservative aspects of religion makes it difficult for the anthropologist to tackle the problems of change. And while it might be granted that religion is often a strong conservative force in reality, in recent years we have become aware of religion as a dramatic instrument for change in millenarian movements.

Elicitation of these major consequences of a functional outlook enable us to recognize that inductivism and positivism lie at the roots of the structural/functional brand of anthropological analysis. The assumptions basic to this approach refer to the analytical separation of society and 'culture' if the latter is seen as the variable mode of expression of universal interrelations and functions; to society as a natural system susceptible to analysis by the methods of the natural sciences for the purpose of systematic classification and the eliciting of generalizations and laws; to the view that synchronic relations are of primary importance.

Changes in Evans-Pritchard's Approach

We must now ask to what extent Evans-Pritchard accepted his traditional theoretical inheritance in his studies of religion and to what extent he modified it.

In his work among the Azande, culminating in his classic monograph on witchcraft, we find that in several respects, even at this early stage in his career, he departs significantly from the structural/functional approach as it is commonly typified. Thus, while adhering to the inductive approach of Durkheim which sees religion as a social fact,

he is also exploring perception, modes of thought and belief. While admitting that "religious conceptions must bear some relation to the social order" (Evans-Pritchard, 1965a:64), he does not allow Durkheim's idea that religious phenomena are merely projections of the social order. He later is to call such reasoning no more than plausible; indeed he says that it is little more than conjecture with meagre evidence to support it (73). Nor does he appear to accept Radcliffe-Brown's modification designed to make it a more sociological proposition when the latter states that there is a direct and immediate relation between religion and the social order. The whole approach of his first monograph would seem to negate this. An important consequence of this divergence was to open the door to the investigation of what the relations are between religion and social structure. Further, despite the fact that the functions of witchcraft, oracles and magic are postulated, he is more concerned to examine the meaning these have in the eyes of Zande society itself. Finally, because he is primarily concerned with a system of thought and only secondarily with links to the social system, generalizations or laws are not possible within a comparative framework. He does, however, engage in implicit comparison of Azande ideas of witchcraft and "our notions of belief, causality and moral system" which provide "a heightened consciousness of what we ourselves mean by these terms" (Pocock, 1961:73).

In this early work his theoretical divergences are not made explicit, except, of course, by his interest in systems of thought rather than in religious practices vis-a-vis the maintenance of social solidarity. Later he is to write quite explicitly on such problems and present his mature views.

What advantages accrue to his implicit deviation from traditional stances? Gluckman (1964:243) believes that he provided a "new range

of problems which fall directly within the field of social relations", and by doing so, shifted the emphasis from 'function', with its built-in limitations for analysis beyond a certain stage of abstraction, to 'structure' with its concern for establishing relations to greater levels of abstraction. It also served to draw attention to systems of belief as being, once more, worthy of consideration in and of themselves.

Gluckman (1964:244) has also pointed out that Evans-Pritchard's analysis of witchcraft shows that:

The acts and feelings of individuals are facts which can be examined in relation both to events in social systems and in individual psychical systems; and their value differs accordingly. For example, Evans-Pritchard shows that it is irrelevant whether in practice an accused witch felt the alleged envy or hatred: when he is accused, he must act as if he did ... if he refuses, this refusal itself will demonstrate his malice. Hence ... analysis on this point does not involve him in making a judgement on the precise internal emotions of individuals; he can content himself with saying what their actions, and their stated feelings are, and these observations are clearly within the competence of a social anthropologist.

He goes on to show how this differs from Kluckhohn's analysis which he believes may be plausible but not substantiated without the assumption of several psychological mechanisms.

In which significant ways does Evans-Pritchard hew to traditional lines in his early work? In this, and indeed in later writings, he never wavers from an inductive approach nor from his belief in the importance of language in analysis. And, as we have seen, he refrains from trespassing on psychological territory. Further, although his concept of society as a 'natural' system is beginning to break up under the emphasis on 'meaning', he never seems to doubt that consistent, if not necessary, relations exist between sub-systems and that all work to

constitute a harmonious whole. In this respect, dysfunctional aspects of witchcraft and its attendant counter-measures, for the individual and for society, are scarcely touched upon. And although there is a hint of the problem of change, there is no possibility of it being developed at this stage. For example, he comments that European influence has resulted in increased witchcraft activities but there is little interest in pursuing this problem. Finally, the contextual dimension of ethnographic analysis is limited to bringing "into orbit of a fact all other facts that are closely related to it in thought and action" (Evans-Pritchard, 1937:5). Little attention is paid to the ambiguities and inconsistencies which may have been recorded as well as to facts that are less closely related to the social fact under scrutiny.

The first explicit and controversial break with traditional studies appears in his monograph, The Sanusi of Cyrenaica. We have already discussed this injection of the diachronic perspective into a structural analysis with its concomitant change towards viewing society as a moral system. As far as religion as a topic for study is concerned, however, this monograph and the article about divine kingship appear to focus on the advantages of investigating relations between systems rather than on an analysis of religion per se. A full-blown structural analysis of religion, with its implications for the comparative method, does not appear until publication of Nuer Religion.

We have discussed some of the factors considered to be relevant to and significant for certain aspects of this later type of analysis and summarize them thus. First, we have noted how field work conditions changed when he moved from the Azande to the Nuer, which led him to an explicit study of values and sentiments; the lack of trained informants was seen to be a salient factor in this change. Second, the period of

time when the Sanusi and the Nuer studies were conducted was seen as a contributing factor to the incorporation of a diachronic perspective; included in this perspective was the tendency to introduce individual phenomena into the analysis. Third, his growing interest in 'meaning', particularly indigenous meaning, superceded that of 'function' and provided the basis for the search for relations within and between systems. Fourth, the explicit assumptions brought to the study of Nuer religion of a belief in a spiritual reality transcending the physical and mental spheres of human life were seen to have induced a recognition of the personal dimension of religious experience in analysis. In conclusion, it can be postulated that the interaction of these factors contributed in bringing him to the belief that anthropology, without sacrificing its commitment to scientific procedure, must also be an art. We must now look beyond these for a hint of the theoretical sources which may have interacted with the above to bring changes in his work.

Source of Theoretical Changes

In reading Evans-Pritchard's work on religion I have been struck by his predilection for certain French writers, and Durkheim in particular, rather than for Radcliffe-Brown's brand of social anthropology. This is fairly apparent in his early work. But the basic change in orientation can be partially traced, I believe, to Marcel Mauss who was Durkheim's successor in French sociological studies and who held the Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France from 1931 to 1942. In his small book, The Scope of Anthropology, Levi-Strauss (1967:13) has paid tribute to Mauss and to Malinowski for their contributions towards protecting Durkheim's sociology from "disembodiment" and from "automatically guaranteed explanation". He goes on to say that Mauss, as

a theoretician and Malinowski, as an experimenter, showed "what could constitute proof in the anthropological sciences. They were first to understand clearly that it was not enough to break down and dissect. Social facts do not reduce themselves to scattered fragments. They are lived by men, and subjective consciousness is as much a form of their reality as their objective characteristics" (14). With his emphasis on field work and on participating in the life of the community, Malinowski was intensely concerned to take into account the native's vision of his world. This was later embodied in causal terms through functional analysis. Mauss (1954:viii) was also committed to the empirical, and, in lieu of field work, "soaked his mind in ethnographic material, including all available linguistic material". His mastery of the sociological method, however, enabled him to perceive the 'total' social phenomena in which "all kinds of institutions find simultaneous expression: religious, legal, moral and economic" (1). In this process he did not oppose causal explanation and understanding, but "in bringing to light an object which may be at the same time very remote and subjectively concrete, and whose causal explanation may be based on that understanding which is, for us, but a supplementary form of proof" (16) he offered a means of guaranteeing that the observer's synthesis approximates the human experience of the people under study. Understanding of the totality then must derive from the meaning of social phenomena apprehended from both the outside and the inside. In Nuer Religion we have ample proof of Evans-Pritchard's commitment to this procedure.

For Mauss, and for Evans-Pritchard at this stage of his work, the emphasis is on the whole. With reference to Mauss, Levi-Strauss has declared:

... the notion of the totality is less important

than the very special way in which Mauss conceived of it: foliated as it were and made up of a multitude of distinct yet connected planes. (11)

Evans-Pritchard's structural analysis is also aimed at understanding the whole. In 1951 he writes:

... the social anthropologist is not content merely to observe and describe the social life of a primitive people but seeks to reveal its underlying structural order, the patterns which, once established, enable him to see it as a whole, as a set of interrelated abstractions. (Evans-Pritchard, 1951:62)

While Mauss (1954:78) was concerned with "realism", with "social facts in the round, as they really are" and in "the study of the concrete" which "furnishes more explanations in the sphere of sociology than the study of the abstract", in his concept of the whole Evans-Pritchard (1951c:82) is partly creator:

What comes out of a study of a primitive people derives not merely from intellectual impressions of native life but from its impact on the entire personality, on the observer as a total human being.... He has to decide what is significant in what he observes and by his subsequent relation of his experiences to bring what is significant into relief.

Despite the criticisms which could be, and have been, levelled at Evans-Pritchard's conception of the whole (Firth, R., 1952:37-39), he has tried to further the attempts made by Malinowski and Mauss to return anthropology to an 'holistic' discipline. In doing so we note that he has been able to retain his original interest in problems of social order.

In conclusion I submit that Evans-Pritchard found some theoretical stimulation in the writings of Marcel Mauss which was to be in keeping with Malinowski's influence, his own field experiences and the time period in which they were carried out and his apparent growing interest in a personal commitment to a set of religious beliefs and

practices. It has been pointed out that the approach which Mauss took permitted him, "without contradicting Durkheim ... to re-establish bridges--which at times had been imprudently destroyed--between his concerns and the other sciences of man: history, since the ethnographer deals in the particular and also biology and psychology, since he recognized that social phenomena are 'first social, but also, and simultaneously, physiological and psychological'" (Levi-Strauss, 1967: 12-13). Surely it is not entirely coincidental that Evans-Pritchard paved the way to re-establish these same bridges in British social anthropology, although he himself may not have crossed over them. In a discussion of the comparative method he writes:

We have to deal with values, sentiments, purposes, will, reason, choice, as well as with historical circumstances....

That there are limiting principles in social organization no one would deny, but within those limits there is nothing inevitable about human institutions. Men have continuous choice in the direction of their affairs, and if a decision is found to be disadvantageous it is not beyond their wit to make a second to correct the first. To deny this is not only to ignore the role of values and sentiments but also to deny that of reason in the social life. (Evans-Pritchard, 1963:34)

New Hypotheses, Concepts and Techniques

What concerns--hypotheses, concepts or techniques--can the anthropologist derive from Evans-Pritchard's writings on religion? A general caution might be applied, first, in that one must cease to look for regularities among institutions in various societies until a number of studies in depth have been carried out in several related societies; one must be content to find out what religion is and what it does in terms of each society and of its members; one must be prepared to search for key concepts in religious beliefs through a comprehensive grasp of

the native language and, most importantly, relational analysis must be made "at any point where religion is in a functional relation to any other social facts--moral, ethical, economic, juridical, aesthetic, and scientific ..." (Evans-Pritchard, 1965a:112). It seems to me that this area would prove to be the most fertile ground both for the generating and the testing of hypotheses. In the next chapter we propose to examine if and how some of Evans-Pritchard's students responded to his challenges and followed in his theoretical footsteps.

CHAPTER SIX

EVANS-PRITCHARD'S INFLUENCE ON SOME OF HIS STUDENTS

Witchcraft and Sorcery--Middleton and Beattie

The publication of Evans-Pritchard's writings on Azande witchcraft and Kluckhohn's Navaho Witchcraft seven years later served to generate interest in this topic as a productive one for research. As these two works have been the major sources for such studies their differing approaches have pointed up the relative advantages and disadvantages of each. On the whole British social anthropologists have preferred to work from Evans-Pritchard's basic stance, following two major lines of investigation. The first concerns the forms which witchcraft takes, the interrelatedness of beliefs and their inherent logic while the second explores the relations of such beliefs to social structure. Middleton and Winter, in Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa (1963), suggest that the latter set of problems has been the major focus of attention. Thus, for example, in his own exposition of "Witchcraft and Sorcery in Lugbara" Middleton (1963:266-7) states that witches as the Lugbara conceive them do not exist. However:

Accusations or suggestions of witchcraft or sorcery, whether put to and confirmed by oracles and diviners, or merely accepted by public opinion, reflect certain stresses which arise at various times within the local field of social relations of a given individual, homestead, family-cluster or local community.

Although witchcraft and sorcery are the cause of sickness and trouble, the means by which they do so can be the means of differentiating between them. Thus "witches have an inherent power which can harm others, whereas sorcerers use medicines which they acquire from other

people" (262). Analysis of the various types of witchcraft and sorcery enables Middleton to correlate accusations and suspicions of witchcraft with kinship relationships, particularly those of agnatic kinship. Sorcery is related mainly to relations within the neighbourhood.

But Middleton goes further in postulating relations between social life and the belief in witchcraft and sorcery. He finds that both witches and sorcerers exhibit attributes which the Lugbara conceive of as inverted. The night witch, the evil-eye man and the witchcraft spitter, while motivated by envy and frustration, share one common trait: "they are weak or thought to be impotent ... and so are not really fully adult and responsible men" (263). Sorcerers are also motivated by envy, sexual jealousy and hatred but are fully cognizant of their deliberate use of medicines. These inverted attributes, in both a physical and moral sense, are also found in "the hero-ancestors, prophets, Europeans and the immanent aspect of Divinity" (271). Any phenomenon which changes what was originally created by Divinity, especially the totality of social relations with its emphasis on authority, is regarded as evil.

Thus:

witches are people who refuse or deny the obligations of authority, particularly the most important of such relations, those of agnatic kinship. (272)

Witchcraft and sorcery fears and accusations are most frequently viewed by the Lugbara vis-a-vis the social relations of power and authority and Middleton concludes that "the world of witches and sorcerers is a mirror world of Lugbara society" (271).

He believes, however, that these fears and beliefs do not merely express inherent tensions in the social structure but also help to maintain it.

The fears of witchcraft usually lead to action which results in the removal of the particular source of tension: the leader suspected of witchcraft loses support and his dependents split into new segments, or a man moves away from a crowded area. (273)

Thus segmentation, the subsequent restatement of genealogies and "congruence between them and the authority structure" (260) results in affirmation of the structural principles upon which the social order rests.

John Beattie, in "Sorcery in Bunyoro" (1963), professes to take a somewhat different tack. He proposes to incorporate Nyoro ideas of sorcery more explicitly into his analysis, to show how these ideas mesh with others they hold of a 'supernatural' nature and how these ideas fit in with Nyoro social system as a whole. Unlike witchcraft, sorcery is held by the Nyoro to be a conscious technique practised within the "field of community relationships" (30). It serves to highlight those interpersonal relationships between relatives and neighbours who live a more or less face to face existence. It is evident, and to be expected, from an analysis of the social and political structure of Bunyoro that few accusations of sorcery are made between peasants and chiefs.

For in this socially stratified kingdom relations between peasants and chiefs are relatively restricted, and they do not provide for the wide range of interpersonal contacts which characterize intra-village relations and which, with high potentialities for friction, are the main breeding ground of sorcery accusations. (31)

Similarly, the most frequent accusations arise among the women who have a subordinate status to men--father, brother and husband. In their restricted social world, relationships are close and intense. Beattie concludes, therefore, that burogo (sorcery) is a "stereotyped response to misfortune rather than an instrumental technique" (31), operating most

fully at the local level and between persons of equivalent status.

Moving from the social to the 'spiritual' realm, he finds that notions about sorcery fit logically with Nyoro conceptions of 'possession' and the use of 'medicines'. The two ideas are not mutually exclusive here as both possess an occult component, the power in the medicines requiring activation by a person. Thus the Nyoro have a wide range of explanations when faced with illness or misfortune, but the category which involves 'possession' is susceptible to almost infinite expansion. This has been much in evidence since the spread of Western influence.

In conclusion Beattie finds the following functions for sorcery in Bunyoro:

... as well as providing an explanation for misfortune, a recipe for action, and a means of self-expression, the sorcery complex also provides a scapegoat, someone to take the blame when things go wrong. (51)

Beattie and Middleton have both probed deeply into the relations between witchcraft, sorcery and social structure, but in doing so have narrowed the field considerably. Thus while Evans-Pritchard fully explored the realm of thought and belief, revealing interrelations and interdependencies, showing how these intersect at various points with social life, Middleton in particular has concentrated on those aspects most relevant to certain elements in the social structure. In doing so he has provided the basis on which typologies and classification may proceed. Indeed, in the Introduction to the monograph in which these essays appear (1963), Middleton and Winter express a hope that the distinction between witchcraft and sorcery, first proposed by Evans-Pritchard, will lead to an understanding of how each fits into the social system in its own way. Further they hope that correlations between witchcraft and sorcery and various types of social groupings, for

example those based on unilineal principles in the formation of local groups, will lead to future typology and classification.

In both the foregoing analyses the underlying assumptions hold with the idea of societies in harmony in which regularities obtain among social relations. Beattie exhibits some interest in a diachronic glimpse of recent history when he refers to the proliferation of 'spirits' and medicines, but he sees them only as they are absorbed into conventional patterns; and although he proposes to deal with the Nyoro ideational system, his primary concern is to manipulate it vis-a-vis Nyoro social life. Middleton also deals summarily with change, while the Lugbara system of belief in witchcraft and sorcery is only touched upon with regard to certain aspects of the social structure. In neither essay is there an explicit discussion of symbolic and semantic problems, problems which occupied Evans-Pritchard's attention to such a degree. It should be noted, however, that as these essays were intended for incorporation in an anthology, all the data could not be included for reasons of space.

Witchcraft and Religion--Lienhardt

Godfrey Lienhardt attacks the problem somewhat differently in "Some Notions of Witchcraft among the Dinka" (1951). He focuses primarily on the word apeth, roughly translated as witch or witchcraft, but he suggests that this merely indicates the limits of its meaning. By examining the linguistic and social contexts in which this word is used, he is able to isolate the characteristic features of witchcraft, especially as they pertain to night witches, the most virulent and most feared of apeth. In this way he can recognize these features in the real situations of witchcraft. Thus, for example, in songs, sacrifice and the trading of insults, he finds witchcraft associated with everything the

Dinka profess to hate:

... situations of conflict with society; with the resentment of people who think they have been robbed or frustrated, and with the idea of a concealed hostility to the victim on the part of the witch. (Lienhardt, 1951:314)

Lienhardt's exposition is framed in terms of Dinka thought and belief of which apeth is but one agent of misfortune, the others being spirits and God. He finds that apeth is related to other Dinka ideas about the homestead (the centre of order) and about the wild land (the home of beasts). A witch, and especially a night witch, is associated symbolically with snakes and with excretion in the homestead and represents the subversion of the standards of behaviour appropriate to homestead and village.

The night witch is an outlaw because he embodies those appetites and passions in every man which, if ungoverned, would destroy any moral law. (317)

Apeth is also an expression of the "concealed intention, the amorality ... of the unique individual self, existing and acting as such" (317). Apeth, then, is an elaboration of the nature of human nature as perceived and experienced by the Dinka.

This mode of analysis is very reminiscent of Evans-Pritchard's treatment of Nuer religion. Both begin by examining a key concept and continue by exploring its ideational and social ramifications, seeking relations and interdependencies. Lienhardt's article on witchcraft, however, remains within the framework of Dinka thought and experience and is not related significantly to the social structure.

He follows this same procedure in his analysis of Dinka religion in Divinity and Experience (1961). As with Evans-Pritchard's recognition of the importance of the term kwoth, Lienhardt finds that nhialic is a key concept in Dinka religious thought and strives to translate and

interpret the Dinka meaning into appropriate English phrases. He decides against using the term God, with its familiar connotations to Western readers, stating:

To use the word "God" in translating some Dinka statements about nhialic would raise metaphysical and semantic problems of our own for which there is no parallel among the Dinka and in their language. (Lienhardt, 1961:29)

He prefers to use the term Divinity which can be used to convey several connotations simultaneously: a being and a kind of existence with either a personal or general reference.

Divinity, clan-divinities (tutelary spirits associated with clans) and free-divinities (associated with individuals, families or clans) are collectively called jok or Power. Essentially then Dinka religion is "a relationship between man and ultra-human Powers encountered by men, between two parts of a radically divided world" (32). The term 'encountered' is used deliberately, for it expresses the phenomenological rather than the theological interpretation which the Dinka give to their religious beliefs, one which grows out of experience rather than from doctrine. Therefore Lienhardt is primarily interested in semantic problems and those of symbolism and with the relations these have with the experiential world of the Dinka.

While Divinity is one, it is also many, as is illustrated by the multiplicity of free-divinities and clan-divinities. The former are active "only where their specific names are known and where effects in human life can be attributed to them" (57); these effects appear through illness, possession and dreams. Thus, in Dinka eyes, these free-divinities force a relationship "upon persons individually, irrespective of their tribe or descent group. They then correspond to experiences ... which are potentially common to all Dinka as individuals ..." (104).

Clan-divinities, on the other hand, provide inspiration, strength and protection and represent a series of relations within the Dinka social order and, most importantly, with Dinka experience of that order.

... though the clan-divinity is not itself an ancestor, it is fully merged in idea and linguistic usage with all agnatic ancestors, and with the whole of Dinka experience of ancestry and agnatic heredity. (122)

Central to the belief in clan-divinities is thek or respect which is due both to the clan-divinity, its emblem and in certain situations in the social sphere. Thek in the former two senses is exhibited by the dedication and sacrifice of cattle, and in the latter sense with varying degrees of esteem, courtesies and avoidance behaviour between agnatic kin. But clan-divinities are not to be seen as "merely the devices by which social groups, considered as entities, are represented, to focus loyalty and affection, on the familiar analogy with national flags or heraldic emblems" (166). They take their meaning from the experience of individuals as members of a specific social group which transcends its individual members and "provide the clearest example of the structure of experience represented by the Powers" (166).

Lienhardt has both accepted and rejected Evans-Pritchard's ideas. By approaching the problem via language and 'collective representations' he is led, as was Evans-Pritchard, to an explicit study of values and sentiments. Unlike the latter, however, he prefers to see them in relation to the physical and social life as it impinges on the Dinka rather than in relation to what the anthropologist may abstract in terms of social structure. His analysis is framed in cultural rather than sociological terms and the relations he postulates between religious beliefs and experience are not necessarily regular or consistent.

If the Powers image different ranges of

experience, we should not expect the several accounts of them given by the Dinka to agree in details, nor their assertions about them severally, when pieced together by us, to have the connectedness and logical consistency of reflective thought. Dinka experience naturally differs from group to group and person to person. (156)

Religion--Middleton

Middleton's Lugbara Religion (1960) is in sharp contrast with Lienhardt's appraisal of Dinka religion. He explicitly states that he does not intend "to present Lugbara religion as a system of theology, but to make a sociological analysis of the place of ritual and belief in Lugbara social life" (Middleton, 1960:v). While Lienhardt is content to draw out the systematic meaning among Dinka beliefs to render them intelligible to those who cannot experience Dinka life, Middleton's main interest is to demonstrate how certain religious beliefs and practices enter into the system of authority by which Lugbara society is maintained through the processes of segmentation. Thus while he describes the major beliefs the Lugbara hold about themselves, about their own and the external world, these are set within the context of social relations. For example, he believes that the cult of the dead sustains the central values of social life, those of kinship and the lineage. He appears to follow Radcliffe-Brown's (1964:68-9) contention that ritual serves to give "regulated expression" to important sentiments in order to keep them active so that they, in turn, by acting upon individuals, "make possible the existence and continuance of an orderly social life".

Among the Lugbara it is believed that a "mystical agent sends sickness to living people, usually as a consequence of an invocation made because of an offence" (Middleton, 1960:129). By analyzing the rites associated with this belief Middleton then demonstrates that "ghost

invocation is usually a response to disputes over authority" (211). Thus organizational changes which occur during the process of segmentation, in which conflicts of interest and authority are salient factors, can be correlated with the patterns of ghost invocation and witchcraft accusations occurring in family clusters. With reference to a particular group of whom he had detailed knowledge, Middleton states:

At the time of my stay it was about to segment, and the amount of invocation, sacrifice and dissension, expressed largely in ritual terms, was correspondingly greater than at other times in its history.... During my stay many rites were performed, most of which were part of the process of realignment of patterns of authority within the group.... (130)

Thus the understanding of the beliefs surrounding ghostly sickness, ghost invocation and so on, can only come from a consideration of the rites performed and when these rites are seen in relation to the social structure.

Middleton's analysis exhibits the structure of and the relations between three types of authority.

One is in terms of genealogical experience and myth; another is in terms of a field of social relations centered upon the lineage and family cluster of the actors concerned; and a third is in terms of the action of God and of spirits. (230)

Establishment of these structural relations enables Middleton, in conclusion, to regard Lugbara society as a moral community. In this final analysis he demonstrates how the events and personages of recent history have become incorporated into Lugbara ideology. Because the Lugbara make an essential distinction between close people, "members of one's own field of social relations, validated by genealogical tradition--and the distant inverted people, who are outside the field of social relations and outside genealogical tradition" (237)--it is possible for them to

sustain the ideal of a changeless social system.

Summary

All three writers are concerned with values as they are exhibited in religion and in their relation to social life. Each, however, has placed a different emphasis on the import of the study of values in the analysis of social relations as expressed in behaviour. As we have seen, both Evans-Pritchard and Lienhardt utilize values as the vehicles by which they can pass to the underlying systems of religious thought and belief, and we have noted their subsequent divergence from each other at this point, the former towards sociological abstraction and the latter towards the concrete experience of social relations. For Middleton and Beattie, on the other hand, values are merely reference points for the clarification and illumination of theories of stability and change in social relations. For both these writers 'meaning' is primarily sociological meaning as it is revealed in significant structural relations; Lienhardt is alone among the three in focusing a great deal of attention on symbolism and problems of semantic translation.

In conclusion, it would seem that Evans-Pritchard's formulations have had less impact on his students (in a favourable sense) than might be expected, with the possible exception of Lienhardt. In this case, however, we may question whether his approach stems directly from Evans-Pritchard or from the similarities which seem to exist between Nuer and Dinka religion. Lack of acceptance, I believe, arises from the basic assumptions, aims and methods which Evans-Pritchard has brought to the study of religion in recent years, but which relate specifically to the field of social anthropology as a whole. In rejecting traditional ideas he has apparently failed to provide those clear and detailed

criticisms and guides to future research which would satisfy and stimulate his fellow anthropologists in Britain. Their rejections seem to centre around at least three problem areas: his basic view of society, the concept of structural analysis and the uses of history in analysis.

By proposing that societies be studied as moral or symbolic systems Evans-Pritchard is suggesting that their components or parts be seen in relation to what the peoples themselves conceive of as the ultimate good, rather than as interdependent parts adjusted to the survival of societies in sociological terms. He is not only rejecting a mechanistic approach to the study of Man but is striving to preserve the 'essential unity' of societies. In doing so, however, he precludes the possibility of discovering universal sociological laws which, it is believed by many, are essential for explanation. He prefers to substitute 'patterns' for 'laws' and disassociates himself from what Redfield (1955:23) calls the abstract, detached and atomizing disposition of science. Many British anthropologists are unwilling to abandon the 'scientific' and empiricist aims of their discipline and settle for 'patterns' which they consider to be descriptive rather than explanatory.

Nor has his structural analysis escaped criticism. The incorporation of the anthropologist as creator in postulating inter-related sets of abstractions is seen by some as lacking proper control.

If the anthropologist treats his subject as an art, in order to express his conviction of the essential unity of social life, what guarantee have we that it is Nuer or Azande that are depicted for us and not some construct of the author's imagination and moral sensibilities?
(Firth, 1952:38)

An appeal to the facts, to the raw data of social life, as a check on the observer's formulations, only serves to emphasize that these differ from

observer to observer and from time to time, demonstrating that there is no way to verify the set of structural relations arrived at in this fashion.

Perhaps Evans-Pritchard's dogmatic assertion that history must be brought back into social anthropology has been the primary cause of his alienation from the traditional mainstream of British studies. The main objection seems to be that he does not show how social anthropology can integrate historical data with scientific interests or how they may modify conclusions reached from synchronic analyses (Smith, 1952:*passim*). No one seems to have picked up his view of history as the experimental situation. Paradoxically, it would seem that the injection of history would eventually lead away from the 'essential unity' of society towards a consideration of how forms constitute part of a "wider unity whose roots lie in particular situations at particular times in the past" (Joel, 1950:168). By failing to draw his formulations to their logical conclusions he has been unsuccessful in attracting adherents to his cause.

He has been instrumental, however, in raising two important problems, that of objectivity and that of comparative studies, to which the writers under discussion have paid varying degrees of attention. In his attempt to evade the assumptions which an empiricist (not empirical) view of society necessitates, Evans-Pritchard has constantly stressed the need to recognize that although the anthropologist approaches social facts as things, these things must not remain the total source of knowledge. In discussing the role of the anthropologist, Pocock (1961: 85-6) has summarized this view:

"Things" cannot remain meaningless to him, and just as, and to the extent that, he becomes conscious and rejects his subjective interpre-

tation, he is obliged to accept the interpretation offered by others--here the people who do, see, use and value "things".

While most anthropologists would not quarrel with this, many seem unwilling to concede that this can be more than a way to "sift and clarify ... material and to formulate propositions of clear-cut and testable quality" (Firth, 1953:146).

Closely related to the problem of objectivity and its tendency to confuse the scientific method with the view of anthropology as a natural science is the business of comparative studies. Under assumptions brought to anthropology as a natural science, the emphasis is bound to be placed on regularities and similarities and Evans-Pritchard (1965b:28) believes that such studies have yielded little "beyond a rather elementary classification of types..." In addition, if carried out prematurely, they would do violence to the 'holistic' view of society. Advances in social anthropology can only be made, he says, by the investigation of limited problems, "firmly grounded in ethnographic fact" (31) rather than by seeking ambitious generalizations; more emphasis must be placed on dissimilarities and inconsistencies; and finally, intensive studies of single societies must be initiated. The latter may prove "more illuminating than literary comparison on whatever scale, if only because, as all who have had the experience must have discovered, a theory which can be well tested by observations in the field can seldom be so rigorously tested by literary research" (20).

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